

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

Journal of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain

founded in 1929

by Sir Francis Younghusband, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., and Mrs. O. Stevenson

VOLUME 3

NUMBER 2

AUTUMN, 1955

Editorial

No apology is needed for devoting almost the whole of this number of CHRISTIAN DRAMA to the International Conference. The fact that our Society was able to organise the first Interdenominational Conference of Religious Drama ever to be held on an international scale was due to the generous assistance given by the Rockefeller Foundation. Delegates to the Conference will remember discussing the need for maintaining a regular exchange of information. It was decided to expand this journal so that it could include news from other countries, especially news of productions and plays. The Editor would urge the Conference delegates or a special correspondent from each country to send us all the news and views that it might be of interest to publish.

Lawrence Peat, until recently organiser for the Northern Region, has now entered Bishop's College, Lincoln, to train for the Anglican priesthood. The Society owes a great deal to his devoted and energetic work. Our thoughts and prayers will follow him in his new sphere.

Mr. David Linnell has been appointed to carry on the part of the work dealing with the New Pilgrim Players. Unfortunately, we have no one to take over the other side of the work as Northern Organiser. This is a problem urgently needing solution.

Miss Joan Ford has been appointed, under the terms of the Rockefeller grant, to make a survey of Religious Drama in Europe. As this issue of CHRISTIAN DRAMA goes to press, Miss Ford is visiting the Scandinavian countries.

Once more, through the generosity of many people, the New Pilgrim Players are reassembling for an autumn tour. Special mention should be made of the encouragement and help given by those at the Summer School. In view, however, of the financial position the Committee has had no alternative but to decide that, unless some regular source of income is found by the end of March, the Company cannot continue after that date.

The International Conference

The first International Conference on Religious Drama was held from Saturday, July 23, to Thursday, July 28, 1955, at Lincoln College, Oxford. The idea originated from two separate sources—the first, from discussions held at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in 1953, when Religion and Drama formed a sub-section of the general theme Religion and the Arts, and the second from discussions initiated by the National Secretary of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain with the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Bishop of Chichester, who knew of both sets of discussions, brought the interested parties together in 1954, but only the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation in offering to finance the organisation of such a Conference made it possible. The whole work of finding and bringing over the people most likely to make such a Conference fruitful was undertaken by the staff of the Religious Drama Society; they desire to express gratitude to all those without whose information and advice they could not have carried the work through to its successful conclusion.

Conclusion? No, rather beginning—for this Conference was undoubtedly only the beginning of an investigation and an exchange of information which may have results of far-reaching importance for the drama, both religious and secular.

Delegates' Arrival

The proceedings opened, in perfect summer weather, with a welcome to the delegates by the Bishop of Dorchester. In all, fifty delegates, representing twelve different countries, were present. Some came direct from the Institute of Theatre History Conference in London. Seats had been reserved in the gallery of the fine Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin, Oxford, for all the Conference members to see T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. The play was presented by a talented company of Gloucestershire players, all amateurs, with the exception of Mr. Martin Browne, who, in addition to producing, himself played Becket—a fine performance in a production rendered unusually beautiful to the eye by Stella Mary Pearce's costumes and to the ear by the remarkable purity and power of the verse speaking. The Gloucester Cathedral Company, which had made a special journey to enable delegates to see the play, must have felt somewhat rewarded by the packed audience which attended the performance.

On Sunday the Rev. Roy Porter preached a sermon in St. Mary-the-Virgin in which he stressed the fact that the drama was a medium peculiarly well fitted to increase an audience's awareness of the conflict between good and evil. He thought those practising religious drama should be "a kind of sensitive spot in the whole world of drama for those who know what they are doing and the importance of it."

After lunch delegates assembled for the first formal session of the Conference.

Function of Religious Drama and Its Present Needs

E. MARTIN BROWNE

In planning an introductory address to this historic Conference, I am moved to attempt two tasks. The first is by far the harder; but I feel that the results of the Conference, if it is successful, will consist precisely in a revision of the statement I shall attempt to make—or in its rejection in favour of a better one. For what I must first try to do is to define our subject. Unless we are on common ground in our interpretation of the term “Religious Drama,” we cannot hope to achieve together any advance in the practice of that art, a common concern for which has brought us together.

Why do we segregate any drama and call it religious? Is not all drama religious? It was born as the means of religious expression in primitive society, and during its development into an art-form it has retained at its centre the being who enshrined the religious rite in his own person, the actor. Transforming himself into another and more significant personality, the actor took upon himself the life of his tribe, of his people, of his race, and suffered those crucial experiences which the race, as audience, suffered with him. Today, the same thing still takes place in the performance of a play before an audience: and this is the reason why we have an unshakable confidence in the survival of the living theatre. The actor’s laughter or his tears are given back to him by the audience who, taking away in their hearts the experience he has given them, keep it there and find that it enriches their own spirits with a larger vision of life.

This we may say can be indeed a religious experience, in so far as it carries its participants from the material on to the spiritual plane. The actor, in order to give that experience, must surrender himself to be the medium through which another human character is created: he must enter into that person’s life and let it enter into him: his understanding of it must be of a divine penetrativeness. This character must be known (be it said in all humility) as God knows, and the entering into it must be a tiny, yet true, fragment of incarnation.

This element in the drama is the one which makes us believe that it has a special value in relation to the Christian religion. Our question then becomes specific: can drama radiate a Christian experience? If the answer is “yes,” then we seek to know what are the elements which make up, or which bring about, such an experience.

Drama expresses itself in terms of human relationships issuing in action. Its very name means “a doing,” an action. And this action is the fruit, not of solitary meditation and decision, but of the interplay between one human being and another. If then we are to look for Christian experi-

ence in drama, it will be in terms of human relationships seen from a Christian point of view, and of human action changed by the impact of Christ's spirit upon the characters. This will be true for drama of all types and upon all subjects. The foundation of our agreement, of our common approach to Religious Drama, will be that it is the experience mediated by actor to audience which alone qualifies as dramatic, and that any drama which casts this experience into a Christian form qualifies as Religious Drama.

This experience may appear in the circumstances of organised religious worship and activity; it may appear in quite different circumstances. We shall have an opportunity on each of our three days' discussion to explore these circumstances in detail, to assess the work done in them and to measure its possibilities in the future.

It may now be more useful to ask certain questions which concern all Religious Drama, whether in church or hall or theatre, whether its subject be Biblical or contemporary, "sacred" or "secular." For not all drama whose characters are Biblical is Christian: and the terminology of this world may be used to express the highest Christian truth. The test is not of the material used but of how it is used and to what end.

How fully, how completely Christian should that end be? Drama is the art which reflects human nature as it is when the play is written, and it is when the play is acted; the purpose of playing, as Shakespeare said, is "to hold the mirror up to nature, to show . . . the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

Thus the drama must necessarily reflect the thought of its time: and the Christian drama of any age will be confined by the limitations of people's ability at that time to assimilate Christianity. Drama is not a means of stating doctrine: it cannot be required to contain in its every manifestation the fully developed Christian creed. Being an interchange of experience between actor and audience, it must speak in terms that the audience can understand. This in our own day means that much religious drama is written in terms of a *search* for Christ, not in terms of finding him. Many dramatists who are deeply concerned with religion have in honesty to present a picture of men groping for a faith they have not got.

Are these plays admissible as Religious Drama? Surely we recognise that one of our greatest needs is for bridges across which the lost sheep can cross the stream of doubt to find their Shepherd. Such plays can act as bridges—if they are soundly built. We should therefore welcome them if they pass certain tests. The tests we should apply are: first, is the search honest, sincere and open-hearted? is the searcher willing to find? Secondly, has he so far travelled, however short a distance, towards the truth? If his direction is not towards Christian faith, we must question it: but if however incomplete, his attitude to human life is potentially Christian, we surely must accept his work.

It has often been said that one of the principal maladies of our twentieth century world is the failure of the means of communication between man and man. Mechanically, the channels of communication multiply

the world becomes physically smaller and smaller. Yet a man can be lonelier than ever before: and understanding between man and man, community and community, is more difficult. With the disturbance of the code of values on which our civilisation was built, words no longer have a generally accepted meaning. Nowhere is this so true as in religion. The traditional Christian terminology has become totally meaningless to millions of people in nominally Christian countries: and its use only fills them with suspicion of being "got at" instead of striking a responsive chord in their spirits.

This is one reason why the play of "Search" is of particular value today: it speaks in a language common to characters and audience, in so far as the author's search is their own.

This difficulty of communication, on the other hand, tends to limit the appeal of the play of traditional, Biblical, Christianity to a small public of professing Christians. It certainly has value for them in reinforcing their faith and stimulating their imaginations in regard to it. But its impact must be very strong dramatically if it is to appeal to the mass of the unconverted: and by those to whom it does appeal it may be radically misunderstood. We need, in fact, to find means of communicating the Gospel itself, the story of our redemption by the incarnate Christ, to those whose language is totally different from our own.

Those means we must seek with all our strength, with open hearts, lively imaginations and clear minds. But we must also recognise that in one respect our drama does differ from any other: and this difference is the justification of the title Religious Drama. This is the drama, not primarily of man's action, but of God's. It is God who is the centre of the drama: Religious Drama shows the action of God in human life and man's response to that action. It carries the principle of the Incarnation into the particular fragment of human living which it shows on the stage, setting it forth in terms of the relationship of the characters to God—the God who took upon Him our humanity, who was bruised for our iniquities, and to whose mercy that and every fragment of human life is completely known. Religious Drama is to be recognised by this: that it is God-centred, and treats of God's action in human lives and their responses to it. This is the drama which (in the final words of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*)

by the grace of Grace

We will perform in measure, time and place.

My second task this afternoon is to give some short account of contemporary religious drama in Britain. This is to begin the series which I look forward to hearing members of the Conference continue, each on behalf of his own country, later in the day. I can only make a few salient points, and my colleagues may well criticise omissions or misplaced emphases. I shall not refer to the history of the Religious Drama Society, since you have notes on that separately in your hands.

First, then, religion has returned to the theatre. A generation ago, no

play in which religion had a place (other than an occasional romantic spectacle) was seen in a theatre devoted to the entertainment of the public. The manager feared that the public would be frightened away: and also that some of the various religious bodies who held such widely differing views of the same faith would certainly attack whatever interpretation the play put on it. Today, we see plays of a strongly Christian character among the best successes of the "commercial" stage. In addition we see a line of poets making a real impression on the British theatre and building for it a contemporary poetic drama: and we find that they are impelled to write religious plays. The approach of each differs from that of the others, but the direction is the same for all. T. S. Eliot has done most, both in making his Religious Drama truly contemporary and in stating a fully Christian point of view. Salvation is seen worked out in *The Cocktail Party* for instance, through individual characters completely of our time. Christopher Fry seldom comes down to the twentieth century for his characters, yet his plays have an obviously contemporary ring: in *A Sleep of Prisoners* the four soldiers do have a searching last-war experience: but they stop short at the search for goodwill and do not go on to look for God. Ronald Duncan's anchorite in *This Way to the Temple* is again a searcher, but he knows he is searching for God, and God finds him. There are many other writers I could name, and who will be discussed tomorrow: perhaps the one I should add now is Graham Greene, whose *The Living Room* is at once so exacting in its analysis of Catholics and so deeply rooted in the Catholic Faith. Many from other countries have been added to this list of religious playwrights: the total effect is of a theatre into which religion has powerfully returned.

A number of the theatre's offerings have found their way into the church. *Murder in the Cathedral*, for instance, has been played in more than a dozen cathedrals and in hundreds of churches all over the country. This is because it is not only a great play but particularly suited by subject and treatment to church conditions. In the last thirty years, English churches of most denominations have come to recognise the value of plays in church, and their seemliness, so long as they are related in character to the worship for which the church was built. There have been some attempts to import the appurtenances of the theatre—the proscenium stage scenery, stage lighting—into the church, but it is now generally recognised that drama in a church must become part of the life of the building, not seek to transform the church into a building of another sort. Equally, it is realised that the play most suitable to a church is one which is suggested by its forms of worship. Henri Gheon's *The Way of the Cross* has had a powerful influence here. It is a dramatisation of the service called Stations of the Cross. Richard Ward and Philip Lamb have made their own use of the influence to create such plays as *Holy Family and Go Down Moses*. The play by Philip Turner which you will see tonight, *Christ in the Concrete City*, is another of this kind: each scene of the drama of the Passion and Resurrection springs from an act of communal worship made by all the actors.

In this drama of the Church we have only made a tentative beginning. The revival of the medieval plays, born of an age when faith was more firmly rooted than in our own, has greatly helped us, but we must create our own drama in terms of our own worship and life today. This is a hard task: and it is natural that very frequently in the parish communities plays are done which repeat the traditional patterns of Christmas or Holy Week or Easter in mime or tableau or simple story, but add nothing of our own to them. The characters remain in two dimensions, the story does not become immediate to us. To give the characters three dimensions, to make us aware of them as people, yet to keep them in key with the forms of worship to which the Church is dedicated, this is the task before us in Church drama.

An even harder task confronts us in the third field, the drama of evangelism. The drama of the theatre, of course, fulfils this evangelistic function in one way—artistically perhaps the best way. But the theatre is no longer a centre of popular art, as it was in Greece or in the streets of medieval York. There are millions of people who have no contact with organised Christianity and who would never think of entering a theatre. What can drama do to bring Christ near to them? Can it go out into the highways and byways?

During the war, we seized an opportunity, with the little company of Pilgrim Players, to begin this work. War raises some barriers, but it lowers others: and it was then possible to take religious plays as entertainment to audiences gathered under non-religious auspices. Today, the New Pilgrim Players under Pamela Keily are carrying on the work. Their repertory is perhaps more obviously religious than was that of the original company: but they are looking for and creating plays which present the Faith unconventionally in ways sometimes so violent as to “take the kingdom of heaven by storm.” They have penetrated into factories and working men’s clubs, and though the majority of their audiences are Christians gathered in churches or church halls, they are ever seeking those outside the fold. Some of the methods to be used may be discussed on Wednesday.

This is a venture of a few devoted young professionals: but the bulk of religious drama production, whether in church or hall or club or street, is of course amateur.

Much initiative and enterprise is shown in producing and in touring plays: and there are firmly established organisations in many parts of the country. I hope we shall hear an account of the work of the Gateway, carried on under the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which is a model for other organisations. The Religious Drama Society itself has many local branches, and these reflect the character of the Society itself in striving to overpass the denominational barriers and to make drama one of the common activities which may be a creative aid to the unification of Christendom.

I rejoice that at this Conference we are gathered together in that spirit of seeking unity through creative exchange. The practical outcome to

which we look forward is that, having talked together and understood how we approach our common task, we may in the future be able to share our plays and our knowledge of how to present them, and to establish in the minds of people in all our countries a conviction that Religious Drama is a road leading to Christ.

Mr. Eliot

At the conclusion of the lecture, delegates had the opportunity of meeting and talking with Mr. Eliot, who had joined the Conference after lunch, and who stayed to tea.

Mr. Eliot, in a short acknowledgment of the welcome extended to him by Mr. Martin Browne on behalf of all members of the Conference said he wanted to make one observation. It was that the new development in the theatre was not so much one in which drama came to the help of a distressed Faith, as of Faith succouring a distressed theatre. People were ready to think that dramatists could aid the Church—they were less ready to realise that the Church could aid the dramatists.

The Conference then proceeded to hear reports from delegates on the state of Religious Drama in their own countries. We reprint below summaries, made by the speakers themselves, of these reports. Where necessary they have been translated into English. Where delegates used English, we have preferred to leave the occasional "foreign" construction, as to correct it would be to remove some of the vitality and fun which were characteristic of the Conference as a whole. Who would wish to use the correct word "length" rather than the incorrect "endurance," when referring to the playing time of some Religious Drama?

Church Play for Industrial Area

Discussions were not permitted this first evening, for the New Pilgrim Players were present to give a performance, in the dining hall after dinner, of Philip Turner's Church play for an industrial area, *Christ in the Concrete City*. Miss Pamela Keily, who has so far produced all the New Pilgrim plays, spoke briefly of the needs which had called forth a play of this kind, and the company then performed it. Technically, the play is modelled to a large extent, on Gheon's *Way of the Cross*, and also owes a good deal to R. H. Ward's two plays, *Holy Family* and *Figure on the Cross*, but has merits of its own quite apart from the indebtedness its author would be the first to acknowledge, and the sincerity-plus-technical-polish which is the New Pilgrims' special quality, did not fail to hold an audience highly critical, and as yet not always perfectly fluent in English. Miss Keily, Mr. Turner and Mr. Lawrence Peat, the advance agent for the company, had to answer many questions after the performance, before the delegates finally sought their beds.

A point worth mentioning thus early in the report is that, from the very first, the Conference members seemed entirely at home with each other. Over and beyond every difference of confession, nationality, language, education and age, the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit really did operate. One was conscious of this fact by the end of the first day

of the Conference, and as the days passed, the fundamental bond of a common Christian concern became more evident, precisely as the differences between points of view became clearer.

We found that it was not possible to keep exactly to the outlined programme, and decided early that group discussions were less profitable than discussions all together—a decision made possible by the willingness of all delegates to give each delegate a hearing, and by the sensitive and able help given by our interpreters.

Religious Drama in the Theatre

The morning of Monday, July 25th, was occupied by a talk from Mr. Harold Hobson on Religious Drama in the Theatre. Delegates had hoped also to hear Mr. Marvin Halverson, of the U.S.A., but in his unavoidable absence, Miss Rosamond Gilder, the New York dramatic critic, and Mr. James Carlson of Minnesota, kindly consented to speak informally about Religious Drama in the American Theatre.

Mr. Harold Hobson spoke on Religious Drama in the Theatre today, particularly in Europe. He affirmed that religion could be of very great help to the theatre, and thought it interesting to note that Salacrou and Claudel in France, no less than Mr. Eliot in England, had written, on the most popular of all themes, that of adultery, plays ranging in depth from the frothy elegance of Salacrou's *Histoire de Rire* to the tremendous force of Claudel's *Partage de Midi*. After analysing some aspects of these two plays and contrasting them with *The Cocktail Party*, he drew attention to the necessity for tension in the playwright. It was not always the completely convinced Christian who wrote the most Christian plays, for the essence of drama is conflict and it is out of his attempt to resolve his own conflicts that the dramatist writes. Mr. Hobson thought that one reason why *Christ in the Concrete City* was not a better play was that the dramatist was, in a sense, too Christian to be able to create the true dramatic tension which is always a conflict between good and evil.

He concluded by a wryly humorous reminder that the Church can only shepherd the theatre for a limited period. As the shepherd's duty is to look after his flock till it is time for him to destroy them, so the Church is of necessity bound to look forward to the time when, all conflict between good and evil being resolved, drama can have no further function to perform. He did not regard this devoutly-to-be-wished-for consummation as being imminent!

Discussion ranged freely after Mr. Hobson's witty and learned opening. Madame Maria Scibor spoke of Claudel's constant waiting upon God as the secret of his spiritual power, and several delegates paid tribute to the pioneer work done by Claudel in the field of Religious Drama. Dr.

Olov Hartman thought that a weakness of many religious plays lay in the playwright's standing outside his characters to condemn or praise whereas the dramatist must identify himself with the whole of life, must be prepared, as Mr. Hobson had said, to "sin in imagination."

Miss Rosamond Gilder, New York, U.S.A. Dramatic critic, teacher, writer.

Mr. James Carlson, Minnesota, U.S.A. Methodist. Member of Commission on Drama of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Director of small theatre in a College of the Middle West.

Religious Drama in the U.S.A.

ROSAMOND GILDER AND JAMES CARLSON

Miss Gilder and Mr. Carlson presented the following report.

I. Interest in the relationship between religion and the fine arts is growing and is evidenced, as far as the art of the drama is concerned, in rather wide spread and varied programmes of study and promotion.

Examples of these are:

(a) The Department of Worship and the Fine Arts of the National Council of Churches has been established—under which has been organised a commission on drama of which Mr. Norris Houghton chairman. The commission, as yet in an organisational phase, has been concerned with the study of theological and aesthetic implications and ideas for the use of drama in liturgy, evangelism, and education. Proposed projects are concerned with publication, the securing of play conferences, etc.

(b) Study programmes are being presented in several college seminaries, and other training institutions. Several theological schools have employed lecturers and instituted readings and courses in the arts, including drama. (Boston University, Union Theological Seminary, the joint faculties in theology of the University of Chicago, Scarritt College, Catholic University, etc.) Other schools and training institutions are interested in the practical aspects of drama and church activities.

II. Increasing activities in dramatics are growing in various denominational and interdenominational movements.

(a) Examples in the Roman Catholic Church are the long-established Black Friars theatre in New York City, the active theatre programme of Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and the stimulus given to creative theatre work by the Christopher Movement.

(b) An interdenominational Protestant summer workshop in Religious Drama conducted primarily for local church workers is conducted

ducted each summer at Green Lake, Wisconsin, under the direction of Amy G. Loomis.

(c) Active departments of drama exist in the educational organisations of the Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, and other Church denominations.

(d) The Christian Student Movement, long interested in drama and religion, is planning a conference for next winter which will emphasise the relationship of art and Christianity.

(e) Direct liaison between the Churches and the professional theatre is limited and sporadic. "The Bishop's Company," under the patronage of the Bishop of the Southern California area of the Methodist Church, which presents such plays as Christopher Fry's *Boy with a Cart* and *A Sleep of Prisoners* has played in many cities of California and across the continent.

(f) Experiments with improvised or "creative" drama are being carried on as well as in the adaptations of dance to worship.

III. *Religious Drama in the professional theatre.* In the midst of a highly competitive professional theatre-scene dramas of special religious significance have made their way when they meet the particular commercial and entertainment conditions of the profession. Examples in recent seasons are the plays of Eliot, Shaw, Fry, O'Neil, Miller and others. Many of these have been seen not only in New York but in theatre centres throughout the continent. The musical theatre has given us presentations of Menotti's *The Saint of Bleeker Street* and a musical adaptation of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Throughout the modern period the professional theatre has introduced the plays of Obey, Claudel, Bridie, Shaw, and others which have been subsequently repeated over and over again in the widely distributed non-professional theatre. The negro folk tradition has given us the oft-repeated *Green Pastures*. The founding of the Phoenix Theatre (now in its third season) in New York under the direction of Mr. Norris Houghton provides a professional repertory theatre devoted to drama selected on the basis of high intellectual and artistic standards as well as a conscious Christian commitment.

IV. *Religious Drama in college and community theatre (amateur and semi-professional).* An increasingly active non-professional and semi-professional theatre of constantly improving standards exists in the U.S.A. The relationship of this theatre to the professional theatre is becoming closer. At least 75 per cent of the universities and colleges now support theatrical activities as a part of their educational programmes. Quite naturally these activities include a large amount of drama of religious orientation. A relative freedom from economic pressure allows these groups to experiment somewhat more freely with new forms and techniques. In several colleges conscious integration between studies in religion and theatre production is undertaken. From here, perhaps, more than in the professional theatre, will come the leadership for any "movement" in the field of Religious Drama.

Monsieur Georges Sion, Brussels, Belgium, Director of "Revue Generale Belge." Dramatist; dramatic critic.

Belgium

GEORGES SION

Christian tradition in Belgium has a long, vital history. Contemporary religious drama still illustrates the same common faith which was once illustrated by the masterpieces of medieval Europe (Elckerlyck, the Nativity Plays in Liège, etc.).

Both our national cultures express this continuity in different, but parallel ways. In Flanders, crowd plays, a brilliant example of which is the *Play of the Holy Blood*, are performed every five years in Bruges. The whole town of Bruges becomes a theatre whose stage is the market square and whose actors are the citizens. Thousands of inhabitants take part in the show, in a spirit of faith, and to the glory of their city. Similar shows have been organised, during the last few years, in Gand and some other towns.

In Walloonian, the French-speaking part of the country, religious feasts are popular too. But these feasts rarely become crowd plays. Religious dramas have been written and performed in several towns or shrines, but they lack the organised magnitude of their Dutch-speaking counterparts. However, we must mention one Passion Play, traditional both in its text and production, which moved a working-class audience apparently devoted to faith. It is the "Passion" of Marcinelle (a suburb of Charleroi) which is performed several times every year at Easter, in a small theatre which, for the last twenty-five years, has attracted large crowds.

From the point of view of writers and of the literary aspect of Religious Drama, we can only quote one famous name. Michel de Ghelderode writes in French but his work shows a Flemish type of mind. A mixture of mysticism and truculence entitles him to his place in the world of Hieronymus Bosch and Bruegel. He has, however, chosen to write in French and therefore he is the embodiment of an aspect of the Belgian soul, which is made of the fusion of two races. As a religious author, Ghelderode is open to criticism. He certainly does not intend, from the start, to write religious plays, and his romanticism thrives on ambiguous feelings and provocative ideas. One could call it glimmers of religion (sometimes of a rather disquieting nature) but those glimmers give his works their general tone. Recently, moreover, Ghelderode has written a play on a theme of local devotion: *The Poor Mary*, which was performed in the open, in Brussels.

Since Maeterlinck, we must admit that Belgian writers in general have ignored the religious theatre. Neither Crommelynck, nor Hermine Closson have written anything for it. But a young Belgian playwright, Jean Mogin, has made his debut with a powerful play which has reached international fame: *To Everyone according to his Hunger*.

Besides these new plays, the Belgian public has had the opportunity of getting to know Religious Drama from abroad. A Flemish Repertory Company, the Vlaamsch Volkstoneel, performed Claudel's plays in a Dutch translation in the towns and villages of Flanders, thirty years ago, before Claudel's work became popular. French-speaking companies also performed Claudel some time later. The revival of religious drama in the world has been warmly welcomed in Belgium. Plays such as *Murder in the Cathedral*, *On Earth as it is in Heaven*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Skipper next to God*, etc., have met with the deep appreciation of a naturally serious-minded public which has recovered intact its Christian soul. Religious Drama, old or new, remains a living reality of the Belgian Theatre.

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Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Netherlands.*

The Netherlands

W. BARNARD

One night my wife and I were on our way to the Municipal Theatre, where we intended to see a new verse-drama by the Dutch poet Eduard Hoornik *Children of Cain*, when we happened to meet Mr. Ben Albach near the theatre. Now Mr. Albach is one of our advocates for Religious Drama and we supposed he was going the same way. But no, he said, I have seen Cain already and now I am on my way to Judas. *Un homme nommé Judas*, by Puget et Bost, was given in a minor theatre. And so we went our separate ways.

One might easily conclude that Religious Drama is overwhelming our theatre today but this conclusion would be rather premature. As a matter of fact there was just a strange coincidence that night. In our subsidised theatres the repertory is normally built up of successful plays from London's West End, Broadway and Paris, of course Euripides, Shakespeare, Molière and Tchekov and exceptionally a play by a Dutch author. In most of our commercial theatres there is no place for Religious Drama. Probably Religious Drama will never find its place in the commercialised theatre of today. We might even say that the professional theatre is afraid of it. And so Religious Drama belongs for the greater part to the amateur zone. Nevertheless, there are in the flood of plays some concerning Biblical themes or religious problems. Cain and Judas bear witness to this. And very recently a new play was produced, *Herodes*, by Mr. Abel Herzberg. In itself it is most remarkable that these characters found a

welcome on the modern stage, although—it ought to be mentioned—also St. Paul (among the Jews—by Werfel) and Father Noah (on the waters—by Obey) some years ago enjoyed success.

This proves that people are interested in the Bible as a source of dramatic stories, but it does not prove that people use the Church as a source of religion. If the interest in Biblical themes should go hand in hand with a renewed interest in the Church and Christian faith, the result might easily be that in future not only certain themes would be used for the normal theatrical purpose, but a new style of drama might be achieved. For religious drama is not only a matter of some special subjects, but far more than that, it is another style of producing and stage-acting. In a way the actor is a priest and his acting a liturgy. Religious Drama should bear that in mind. The link between worship as a mission of the Church and Religious Drama should never be forgotten. It is pre-eminently poetry on the stage that might be very helpful in creating a drama that might become a parable instead of an imitation of human life.

In this country as far as I know a revival of Religious Drama and rebirth of verse drama have been going hand in hand up to now. Great poets and church dignitaries are well aware of the importance of this. But in my country a similar development is not found. Religious Drama in Holland is chiefly pursued by the Christian youth-movement, Y.M.C.A. or rather Y.W.C.A., and S.C.M. Of course they run the risk of overruling the drama by education and idealism, good intentions and pious reflections. And if you want to worship your Saviour by performing a play you have only to play as well as you can "to the glory of God and for fun." It was Jim Bartholomew, now deceased, who expressed it in this way, in a talk with some Dutch young people. And I am happy to have heard him say it.

These youth-movement people, eager to get plays and inspired by some examples from abroad, challenged some poets to enlist their talents in the service of Religious Drama. One of our best poets, Mr. Martinus Nijhoff, who was always trying to find new ways for poetry to reach people's hearts, accepted the commission to write a Nativity play, *The Star of Bethlehem*, which earned a widespread reputation, far beyond the youth-movement circle. It was written to be produced in a church if possible and now can be considered as a traditional part of Christmas celebration in many parishes. It was followed by an Easter play, *The Lord's Day*, and a Whitsun play, *The Garden of the Saviour*. These plays are written in lovely poetry using plain words in a very personal manner and yet with a real liturgical note. It took some time before the official critics admitted the literary and dramatic value of these plays, which are always performed in places where dramatic events are not supposed to be found. For deep and disastrous in our country is the gulf between stage and pulpit, theatre and church, between professionals and amateurs, too. So Mr. Christopher Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners* was produced in the theatre with a cardboard church on the stage, but it did not come to life till it was performed by a church-group in an old church in Amsterdam, on the eve of V-dag.

memorial eve, which was repeated annually. Undoubtedly it is this collaboration between Church (not only youth-movement but Church itself) and poets who hope to strike a responsive chord, that can lead to a real revival of Religious Drama in the Netherlands.

An interesting example of Religious Drama in a style and a function of its own was given in the first T.V. church broadcast. A play *The Great Migration* was written by three authors (Jan Wit, Guillaume van der Graft and Ted Logeman) and fitted into the common liturgy. The actors, an all-professional cast and some of them Jews, acted the Exodus and the paschal-meal round the table of the Eucharist.

Another example is a short play by Jan Wit, *Talk on the Way*, about the prophet Elijah, also to be performed in a church-service with the preacher in the part of an angel of God. Some other plays, for instance *No Man's Land*, by the same author, can only be played by groups in open air, but as a matter of fact there are also endeavoured some attempts to give a new kind of play for the theatre. I mentioned Eduard Hoornik. It is still questionable whether a specific theatre for Religious Drama with a company of its own could be managed, but it would be of great help. And up to now on the part of the official theatre-guild a real encouragement is lacking. Nevertheless I think that in my country Religious Drama has a future. Not only owing to the groups all over the country who try to give something really artistic, really creative and really Biblical to the glory of God and for their own fun—but also because of the one great tradition in our national theatre-life. Every year on New Year's day the classical tragedy of *Gijsbreght van Aemstel* is performed in the Municipal Theatre of Amsterdam. It tells a medieval story in perfect alexandrines and it seems to be nothing more than a historical play. But it is more. It is in fact a very fine religious drama which was destined by its poet, Joost van den Vondel, to be produced on Christmas Eve and some of the choruses are now inserted in our hymn-books. Perhaps this may be considered as a symbol of a possibility which might be fulfilled even in our days.

Dr. Edmund Stadler, Berne, Switzerland. Roman Catholic. Curator of the Swiss Theatre Collection. Teacher of Theatre History at the Universities of Berne and Zürich. Member of the Committee of the Swiss Society of Theatre Research. A representative of German-speaking Switzerland.

German-Speaking Switzerland

EDMUND STADLER

The Christian Drama in Switzerland can look back on an unbroken tradition in many places.

The humanistic Schooltheatre, which came into being in the early sixteenth century, performed, apart from classic comedies, also Biblical school dramas, among other places in Basle, Berne, Biel and Zürich. In the age of Baroque the Religious Schooltheatre came to a new blossoming not only in Catholic places like Fribourg, Lucerne and Einsiedeln, but also in the Protestant town of Berne, where, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a play *Christus Triumphans* was performed, and at the end of the century an Allegory, which with its presentation of the suppression of the Protestants by the French Royal Dynasty, nearly led to a political incident. In the nineteenth century Religious Drama was pushed to the background in Catholic Switzerland, and in reformed Switzerland it ceased altogether. A new revival began to make itself felt at the turn of the century.

In 1897 the Schooltheatre of Sarnen brought out a world première of a Swiss Thomas à Becket drama, by Heinrich Federer, which was repeated in 1947. In the first half of the twentieth century there were revived with success not only old plays like *Everyman* or *Cenodoxus* by Biederman, or *The Painter of its own Shame* by Calderon, but also there was performed for the first time in Switzerland in the College Maria Hill in 1947, the *Gallicanus* of the German nun Roswitha of Gandersheim, who at the end of the tenth century had written a Christian Anti-Terenz.

A very special occasion was the open-air performance of the *Great Theatre of the World* by Calderon in 1947 in the Court of the Stockalper Palace in Brig. But also modern works were performed, as in 1949 in the convent school (Stiftsschule) Engelberg, the première in the German tongue of *Columbus* by Paul Claudel in 1951 on the college stage of Stans, the *Everyman Today* by Lesch, and again and again works by the French pioneers of Christian Drama, Henri Ghéon and Brochet.

Since the 'thirties, religious plays were also performed at the universities of Switzerland. So, for instance in 1942, in the Prediger Kirche (Preachers' Church) in Basle, under the direction of Dr. Kachler, there was shown the *Easter Mystery of Engelberg* (Osterfeier) of the fourteenth century, as well as the *Story of the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus and St. Thomas* from the Monastery of St. Benoit-sur-Loire, or the *Lamentations of Mary* (Marienkluge) of Trier. In 1945, the undergraduates of Berne University gave under the same direction the *Lucifer* by Joost van den Vondel. In 1952, undergraduates from Zürich University played *Everyman* by Hofmansthal on the stairs of their university, and this summer, 1955, the undergraduates of the Fribourg University gave a performance of the *Redentiner Easter Play* in the hall of their university.

Still further back goes the tradition of the religious People's Theatre. In introducing the vernacular, Switzerland took pride of place before all other German-speaking countries. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, through the "Easter Plays" of Muri, in the year 1300 through the St. Gallen "Christmas Play," the oldest German Mystery Plays were created which, moreover, are characterised through their very specific dignified attitude.

This very specifically Swiss Mystery Play reached its climax at the closing of the Middle Ages with the *Easter Play of Lucerne*. In the contemporary notes of the State Writer (Poet Laureate) and producer Renward Cysat we possess still today one of the most important sources of the Medieval Mystery Plays, and of his production. But also in the Protestant town of Zürich there was performed in 1542 a Passion Play. In the age of Baroque, it was in particular the Orders of the Benedictines and the Jesuits who brought the religious theatre of Switzerland to a new climax, which in country places lasted far into the nineteenth century, whereas in the Canton of Wallis there was no interruption. *The Play of Antichrist and the Last Judgement* by Professor Franz Jost, for instance, which was given in 1930 in Raron, goes back to a Walliser traditional "Last Judgement Play" which was not interrupted even in the nineteenth century. However, *The Passion*, performed in 1928, 1930 and 1946 in Raron, comes from the pen of an Austrian writer, Richard Kralik, and shows influences from Oberammergau. More genuine and truer to the Gospel source is the Passion Play of Lumbrein, which still in 1881 was performed in its original form.

The people of Salzach, as well, looked towards Oberammergau and were influenced by it when they performed in the 'nineties of the last century their periodically recurring "Passion Plays." A far-reaching revision was intended, with a text by Caesar von Arx and music by Honegger, to be performed in a modern theatre, but these hopes unfortunately were smashed by the second world war.

Much more fruitful were the suggestions which after the first world war came to Switzerland from the French and German theatrical movements. In 1922, for instance, undergraduates from the University of Marburg played in Zürich a play of "Adam and Eve" and the Stuttgart Amateur Group of Players (led by Hass Berkow) gave performances of Christian Mystery plays in the Church of Zürich-Oberstrasse.

Moreover, the religious professional performances, produced by Max Reinhart, which had started in 1919, of the "Salzburger Festival Plays"—especially *Everyman* by Hofmansthal, since 1920, did not remain without influence.

In 1924 the Salzburg Father Joseph Schäfer produced the old Lucerne Passion and Easter Play in a revision by the Munich author Herman Dimmler, in the Festival Hall in Lucerne. In that play, Christ was represented by Joseph Kaindl, who had played Christ in the Passion Plays in Thiersee, but all the other parts were played by amateur players from Lucerne. With this performance the old "Crowning Brotherhood of Lucerne" (Bekrönungsbruderschaft), the oldest existing play society in Europe, fulfilled, after a very long interval, again one of the tasks allotted to them. In 1929 the Brotherhood was given a new constitution by Eberle on the occasion of the performance of his *Bruderklausenspiel* (Hermitage of the Brothers Olajn) in the Theatre of Lucerne.

With this same Brotherhood Group of Players, Oskar Eberle, one of the outstanding renewers of the Religious Theatre of Switzerland, produced

in 1931 in front of the Court Church *The Prodigal Son* by Hans Salas of the sixteenth century, in a revision by Ferdinand Schell, in 1932 in the City Theatre *The St. Gallen Christmas Play* in a revision by Hans Reinhart, 1934, in the just finished Art and Concert house of Lucerne, had a Passion Play on a stage which was built on the steps of the Orchestra and which was a modern "simultan" stage. It was repeated in 1938 in the open air in front of the Court Church (Hofkirche), and also, in the same year, in the new "Charles Church," appeared the *Mystery of the Mass* by Calderon. We also should mention the Lucerne production of Eberle *Thomas More*, 1936, in the Art House, *Everyman*, in a Swiss-German edition, 1942, in front of the Court Church and *The Miracle* in 1947, in front of the Franciscan Church, all works from the pen of Eberle. Since 1935 he also took over the production and direction of *The Greek Theatre of the World* by Calderon in front of the Baroque Monastery Church in Einsiedeln, which was one of the most important manifestations of the religious People's Theatre in Switzerland, which again this year bears witness to the high standard of the Swiss People's Theatre. Eberle also gave courses, amongst others, as Director of the department "People's Theatre" at the Swiss Theatre School in 1949, and on ten evenings in Zürich a course on Mystery Plays.

Besides Eberle, Iso Keller distinguished himself as a renewer of the Catholic Theatre in Switzerland. The Youth Players Group, founded by him, and called "Christophorus," and resident in Zürich, played, amongst others, in 1947, *The Prodigal Son* by Charly Clerc, 1948, *As We Forgive Them* by Paul Kamer, who for his *Brother Death* in 1946 received the first prize in a competition of the Swiss Popular Theatre. He also produced his own plays, among them being a modern "Death Dance Play," *The Dance of Souls*, 1949. Since 1949 he has also led courses, and also distinguishes himself next to Arnold Amstutz at the Catholic Advice Centre for Plays. In 1953 he organised an amateur play country meeting group in Einsiedeln, at which 220 leading men of the Catholic Amateur Players were present.

Owing to the work of Eberle and Keller and others the religious plays gained ground also in the smaller places, roughly 150 Catholic Theatre Groups performed about fifty religious plays. The tendency was towards a modern style of production.

A revival of the Religious Theatre started after the world war, not only in the Catholic but also in the Protestant German Switzerland. In Basle which is famous since the sixteenth century for its presentations in picture of "Death Dances," there were again and again performances of "Death Dance Plays" since 1920 of a quite unique character, in front of the Minster. In this movement poets like Albrecht Berneuilli and artists like Burkhard Mangold joined in. In 1943 one of the most modern Swiss artists, Walter Bodmer, created the modern "scaffolding" stage, with "simultan" platforms for the *Death Dance Play* of Marietta von Meyenburg. In 1945 several hundreds of amateur players without make-up performed the *Peace Play of Basle* by Herman Schneider.

When in 1933 the German Stage Society (Bühnen Volksbund) was disbanded, some of the leaders emigrated to Switzerland, such as Otto Bruder and Heinrich Fulda, the author of evangelical plays, who became the leader of the "Swiss Amateur Play Ring." In 1939 the evangelical amateur theatre came much to the fore at the "Country Exhibition" in Zürich: 300 players performed under the direction of Heinrich Fulda *As it is Written* by Adolph Maurer. In consequence, there was formed the evangelical play group "The Young Church," under the leadership of Professor Xander Baeschlin, in Gwatt (Berne) and Professor Brunner in Frauenfeld. Also in many other places groups were formed.

Both these Swiss pastors led Swiss Amateur Players' Weeks, in which modern religious plays by Brochet, Bruder, Mirbt, Roland de Purcy (*The Gospel Play of the Supper*) were produced. *Where Love Is* by Tolstoi was also produced. A supplement, "Evangelical Amateur Plays" was published regularly in the *Swiss Theatre Newspaper*. The fact that permission was received so often to play in churches was due, in no small measure, to "The Young Church." In 1948 the Church Council of the Canton Zürich opened a competition for a good evangelical play in which 103 plays were entered. The first prize went to the artist Samuel F. Müller for his *Fire in Elsass* in which he portrayed the life and work of Pfarrer Oberlin in Elsass during the French Revolution.

Let us now look at the Swiss Professional Theatre. The importance of the Goethanum which was erected after the first world war at Dornach by the Anthroposophists, the followers of Rudolf Steiner, is well known. It is built on the ideas of Goethe, as interpreted by the German Rudolf Steiner, and therefore cannot be counted as a contribution to Swiss theatre life. But we would like to draw attention to the fact that the Swiss playwright, Albert Steffen, has most definitely contributed to the development of the modern Mystery Play. One cannot, so far, speak of a religious movement within the Swiss professional theatre. However, there were occasional performances by professional players at festivals, e.g. in the twenties *Everyman* by Hofmansthal was played by Alexander Moissi in front of the Court Chapel in Lucerne, and *The Sacrifice Play* by Robert Faesi with Swiss players at the Zürich Festival; in the 'thirties, *The Great Theatre of the World* and *Everyman* and religious ballets were performed in front of Berne Minster; in the 'forties, Advent and Christmas plays by Emmy Sauberbeck were performed in the French Church in Berne. Of the plays in our town theatres, we would like to mention only a few. In 1945 the world première of *The Holy Experiment* by Fritz Hochwälder at the Städtebund theatre in Biel-Solothurn, and *The Brothers in Christ* by Caesar von Arx at the Zürich Playhouse, and also performances of *Murder in the Cathedral* by T. S. Eliot in Basle and Zürich in front of the County Museum and in the Playhouse; in 1951 in St. Gallen the German première of *Tobias and the Angel* by Bridie at the Zürich town theatre; in 1952 the world première of *Dialogue des Carmélites* by Bernanos at the Zürich Schauspielhaus; and in 1954 the world première of *Tobias and Sara* by Claudel at the Zürich Playhouse. During the last few

years, *A Sleep of Prisoners*, by Christopher Fry, was played by some group in churches, and Calderon's *The Great Theatre of the World* was performed in Zürich.

It is also of great interest that religious plays are performed in our Repertory Theatres, but this has very little to do with the real "religious play movement." In the spring of 1955 a religious company of young professional players called "The Call" was founded in Zürich, which has had the support and help of the official Reformed Church.

There is now in preparation a second religious professional company which is interdenominational in its choice of plays. They have accepted works of Edzard Schaper, John van Druten, Stefan Andres, Christopher Fry, Alesandro Casona, and other modern authors. They want to perform only such works as deal with topical problems of modern man, and are conceived out of a common Christian attitude.

This group is meant to consist only of professional players who are in agreement with the aims of the group, and identify themselves with them. In principle, they do not want to play in churches, and they will also try not to get involved in Conventions of the Official Church Council. The leader of this group of players, which is, as yet, in formation, is the young Zürich undergraduate Eduard Abel, who already shows a good deal of courage in such a difficult undertaking, and deserves all our moral support.

Professeur Maurice Deleglise, Sion, Switzerland. Roman Catholic. Professeur of the College of Sion. Dramatic critic.

French-Speaking Switzerland

MAURICE DELEGLISE

Apart from Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchatel, who have permanent theatres, the professional theatre does not exist in French-speaking Switzerland. On the other hand, love of the theatre is very strong in our country districts where amateurs very often give artistic productions.

The repertoire is that of the French theatre, although certain authors occasionally make happy attempts which only have, from the point of view of territorial exiguity, a limited scope. Foreign authors of high standard are also well appreciated. In the field of Christian theatre or of religious inspiration, apart from medieval or classical works which have a religious tone (Grebou, Theodore de Bèze or Racine, for example), the following authors are also called upon: Ghéon, Broche, Chancerel, Gignoux, Bernanos, Gabriel Marcel, Péguy, Claudel, Mauriac, Obey, Miloz, Calderon, Martens, Timmermans, Ghelderode.

The activities of the big Catholic Colleges (Fribourg, St. Maurice and

Sion) help towards giving polish to amateur village experiments. On the other hand, the movements of Catholic Action pursue attempts at theatrical revival and dramatic expression which are suitable to them in relation with the similar studies of the same movements of France or of Belgium, noting nevertheless that the theatre "de masse," which is so characteristic of this latter country, is not successful in French-speaking Switzerland.

To remedy this poverty in the repertoire, especially at the Feast of Christmas, a group of amateurs, "Les Compagnons de Romandie," was founded at Geneva in 1935 to make known works of good quality presented to the public with the maximum of artistic guarantees. It pursues a fruitful activity which places it in the forefront of theatrical productions and equals in value the work of professional actors. Inspired partly by the rules of "Les Compagnons de Notre-Dame," by Ghéon, it no longer limits itself solely to religious productions, and its ambition is to serve the theatre primarily by choosing worthwhile works without worries of edification in the restricted and pejorative meaning of the word.

Having witnessed their success, some professional actors have occasionally undertaken the presentation of Christian plays and it was thus that the following plays were produced: *Le Comédien et la Grâce*, by Ghéon at the "Comédie" in Geneva, and *Miguel Magnara* by Miloz by the "Compagnons de la Marjolaine," professional actors of Lausanne. The big tours of foreign actors, for example that of the Heberthot Theatre, produced with great success *Rome n'est plus dans Rome* by Gabriel Marcel, *Asmodée* and *Le Feu sur la Terre* by Mauriac, *Jeanne et les Juges* by Thierry-Meaubrier.

In several places, the custom is perpetuated of grand seasonal productions of the kind of Passion Plays or "Celebrations."

Let us note in finishing this brief report that our students knew how to prove their courage and judgment in their choice of authors and plays. From 1920 to 1930 the abbey of St. Maurice in Valais provided Ghéon with a theatre, actors and public long before his influence was recognised in France. In the same way, the university people of Geneva and Lausanne presented *Partage de Midi* and *La Ville dont le Prince est un enfant*. Indeed, the latter play does not belong in the category of Christian drama, but its subject provides food for spiritual reflection.

This report has no other pretension than that of showing that French-speaking Switzerland is trying to gain an honourable place, in accordance with its possibilities, in the contemporary effort to revive the Religious Drama. For this it calls upon the best foreign authors whilst trying, at the same time, to stimulate local authors. The problem of those in responsibility is primarily that of giving artistic works capable of elevating the soul whilst "making it feed on beauty," according to the words of Pius X.

N.B.—The Religious Drama in the Protestant Church follows the experiments of the French. When a theatrical play is given in a Protestant church, it is given first and foremost as a special occasion and not in relation to the church service.

Pastor Poul Pedersen, Bagsvaerd, Denmark. Rector of the Lutheran Church. Director of many productions of Christian plays.

Denmark

POUL PEDERSEN

None of our professional theatres is specially interested in Religious Drama; but religious plays are performed along with secular plays only they are dramatically genuine. The Old Play of *Everyman* will turn up now and then and is popularly regarded as the paradigm of Religious Drama. Years ago the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen performed (for the benefit of a Grundtvig Memorial Church) every Easter Saturday the fine Resurrection play *The Daffodil* by Grundtvig (the founder of the Popular High School movement)—which has also been performed by amateurs in churches, and ought to be exported, too!

From recent Danish plays it is reasonable to mention *Judas* by Oluf Bang, performed by the Royal Theatre—and then, of course, the dramas of Kaj Munk (e.g. *The Word, Cant, An Idealist, He Sits at the Melting Pot*—all available in English). Moreover, in most recent times Finn Methling has written beautiful things in the field of Religious Drama; and next winter the quite young theological student Preben Thomsen is going to have his Old Testament drama *Atalja* performed in the Royal Theatre.

Of T. S. Eliot only *The Cocktail Party* has been performed, and this with out great success. On the other hand the drama of Paul Claudel and Arthur Honegger, *Jeanne d'Arc au Bucher*, has been performed with great success this year.

Fundamentally the same may be said about broadcasting as about the professional theatre. The same authors have been performed here. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Man Born to be King* have been presented by the Danish State Radio.

Organised Amateur Theatre

Through many years there has been great interest in amateur plays but only during the last twenty years a conscious effort has been made to elevate the amateur theatre concerning both stock and instruction. Danish amateur theatre is at present organised in two corporations: "Danish Amateur Theatre Union" and "Danish Amateur Theatre Co-agency." President of the latter is a minister, the Rev. H. Skjerk in Hornslet; and as a leading stage manager of this organisation Mr. Just Thorning has done grand pioneering work. Both corporations are dealing with both secular and religious theatre. Both inside these corporations and sporadically and locally, religious amateur theatre has been used a good deal within the Christian youth movement (Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and Boys' Brigade) both as festival plays and for the rest as an integrating part of the work. Numerous local Christmas plays (crib plays and Epiphany plays) also ought to be mentioned.

The main difficulty is in finding genuine stock, as the professional dramatists seem not to have an eye for the possibilities of Religious Drama, so that you will often have to rely on translations. A great help to find the right play are three pamphlets with short reviews of 250 plays. The pamphlets are edited by the corporation "Danish Amateur Theatre Co-agency," and also many religious plays are mentioned here.

Another difficulty occurs within the pale of instruction. Often professional stage managers are used without being expected to have the proper religious experience. And the trade union mentality of professional actors has hitherto made it impossible to perform a play by a mixed cast of professional and amateur performers.

Separate Greater Amateur Performances

The Rev. Halfdan Helweg has through a series of years in his church in Copenhagen (Church of the Holy Ghost) performed church plays of his own, written over the Comparisons of Our Lord and with a directly proclaiming aim in an actual and nowadays application.

The Rev. Poul Schou in Aalborg has through the last three years written and performed in his church special Passion plays, which like the plays of Rev. Halfdan Helweg have gathered many people, many of whom were aliens to the church.

The Vigil by Ladislaus Fodor was performed this Easter by a Y.M.C.A. group in Copenhagen—a fine performance, but a too-scarce audience!

I myself have arranged, in these last five years, open-air performances of Christian dramas in Bagsvaerd, a suburb of Copenhagen. Authors of the plays were Henri Ghéon, Dorothy L. Sayers, Sigurd Christiansen, Claude Houghton and Norman Nicholson.

Finally it may be mentioned that on the initiative of the late Dean N. J. Rald the splendid play *Prophet and Carpenter* by the Swedish author Dr. Olov Hartman has been performed in two churches in Copenhagen as well as in some cathedrals all round in the country. The parts were played by, amongst others, nine clergymen. Stage manager was the Swede Tuve Nystrom. This play, as well as the Bagsvaerd plays, are literarily of high carat, whereas most other religious amateur performances literarily are of a rather medium nature.

Herr Ferdinand Held-Magney, Iserlohn, Federal Republic of West Germany. Evangelical United Lutheran. Theatre Director and producer. Works for Home Missions and parishes.

West Germany (1)

FERDINAND HELD-MAGNEY

In Germany today thirteen theatres which work on a basis of conscious Christian evangelism have been united to form the "Working-Group of

the Christian Professional Theatre." The chairman is Dr. Walter Gutkelch, vice-chairman the theatre director Ferdinand Held-Magney.

Two of the Christian theatres are in Berlin, one of them in the Eastern Zone. This latter comes under the pastoral office of the superintendent of Leipzig. Under the different cultural conditions defined there by a strong demarcation between the State and the Church, our brother-theatre activities—the Leipzig "Spielgemeinschaft"—are confined within the parishes. Common to the development of all our theatres has been the difficulty of complicated economic circumstances. Subsidies by Church or State are negligible. Any kind of help forthcoming is generally restricted to well-meant benevolence: Christian Socialism with a gentle tap on the shoulder.

In the large towns in front of an often quite demanding public as well as under simpler circumstances in small towns and villages our players perform almost nightly their plays in front of farmers, industrial workers, middle-class audiences and miners, and are followed with attention by young and old. Acting is their service. The plays, which the Church may regard as the gifts of her poets, can be thought to be a development towards Christianity in the dramatic literature of our time, if one looks at it from a historical-literary point of view. All the groups do the work of veritable pioneers demanding great sacrifices of their actors and leaders. One might say these theatres exist in the very focus of life. They go to refugee camps, into the prisons, in the tent-mission, into mining towns, villages, in new housing estates as well as into clubs and adult education establishments. Important tasks—like the mission to the educated—have been already begun. All the groups employ almost exclusively professional actors. In a social sense there remains much to be done for these co-laborers. The actors erect their stages, lighting equipment, etc., themselves; some of them have their own motorised transport. So one or two of the actors must also be drivers. The repertoire comprises large-scale Biblical plays, such as the plays of the Annunciation by the Swiss preacher-poet Armand Payot (*Ye shall be as Gods, The Man on the Rope, The Unconquerable Voice*) or *Schalom* by Heinz Flügel. We find problem plays like *The Flood* by Borlach, as well as plays by Sartre, Eliot, Christopher Fry; also plays of our time as, e.g., *Ship Without Harbour* by J. de Hartog, *Thirst* and *The Sign of Jona* by Gunter Rutenborn, even sensational plays based on Christianity like *Trial by Night* by Fodor. Bernt von Heiseler's aspirations for the preservation and Christian continuation of our classical inheritance are being supported with different plays. In such a direction lies, too, the choice of Hofmansthal's *Everyman* version, which already takes us towards the Mystery Plays and also Calderon's *Great Theatre of the World* in Joseph von Eichendorff's translation. This then brings us to Manfred Hausmann's dance of death, *The Dark Dance*. One might say that the impulse of real Christian Drama originates in the first place with the artists and not with the Church leadership. To all the artists concerned this Bible word gives direction to their service:

"Every way, whether in pretence, or truth, Christ is preached."—Phil. 1:

Dr. Walter Gutkelch, Bielefeld, Federal Republic of West Germany. Evangelical. President of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Berufsbühnen. Author.

Dr. Gutkelch wrote this report in his capacity as a member of the sub-committee "Darstellende Kunst" in the "Kammer für die publizistische Arbeit"—of which Bishop Dr. Hanns Lilje D.D., is the president—of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). It has been supplemented by passages from two radio talks by the author: "The Christian Stage" and "The Theatre and the Cabaret as Media of Evangelism." They were broadcast by the "Freies Berlin" and by the "Südwestfunk" (Baden-Baden) stations early in July 1955, having the Oxford Conference in view.

West Germany (2)

WALTER GUTKELCH

For centuries, the Slavonic East has been to the imaginative world of the average German, either a cartographically green, or a spiritually ice-bound plain. Similarly, over the same period and to the average member of the Church, the theatre. After the plays of the Middle Ages had been thrown out into the market place, nothing sufficed to save the separation of the ecclesiastical and the theatre-historical developments from a climate of mutual and shy unrelatedness. In Germany, this alienation was not mitigated by the late nineteenth century's attempt to return to the starting position of German classicism which was linguistically and thematically determined by the Biblical world. Also, the dramatic attempts of, e.g., Pastor Nithack-Stahn or the one-time vice-president of the City of Berlin's Synod, Ernst Bittlinger, (after the first world war), did not represent a basic contact between the two "realms," church and theatre. From the beginning, the mutual incongruity of the actual forms of the ecclesiastical and the scenic intentions, hardened in indisputable historical traditions, put such gap-bridgings on to the level of experiments. On the other hand, the revival of the "Everyman"-play and some buds of the open-air theatre made the religious theme, if not the genuinely Christian one, a subject of discussion—a discussion, however, which was of a purely aesthetic nature within the general indifference of the bourgeois art-religion.

A Fated Re-encounter

It must be regarded as far more than an interesting novelty that already in the very first years after this second world war, independently in different regions of Germany, talks between representatives of the traditional theatre and officers of the Church took place. For the spontaneity of such encounters (and it is interesting that they were mainly inaugurated by the theatre people) shows that either side knew they were by their mutual and proud aloofness co-responsible for the political and warlike misdevelopments of the century. Soon the newly founded Evangelische

Akademien raised the theatrical question in the framework of their wider aims (the encounter between Church and world). Here, something quite different had happened from a mere new thematic acquisition into the will to encounter by a Church confronted with a new chance. This was a step towards an understanding which was a so far quite undiscovered possibility for the life of the Church itself.

The Changed Man Demands the "Three-Dimensional" Word

This possibility is not only a form of presentation that enriches evangelism by way of supplementing it. It is an existentially-unavoidable appeal to both the secularised present, and the Church that presses forward beyond its restoration. For the general change of our environment into a techno-political oppression complex that latently hammers away at our subconscious, has also led to a change, not of man but of the human forms of acquisition. Not by way of hearing, thinking and believing, but by way of discussion, empirically and emotionally does the man of today try to master the whole tumult of impressions and ideas around him. His inner self is therefore inevitably moved "scenically" in a different way from that of the Middle Ages or Early Pietism: it is in a continually active irritational relation with the sensual world. Thus, like the sensual world itself, his inner self bears the stigma of pro and con—even where it says clearly its yes or no. Today, the digging out of wildgrowing objections is often, even for the believer, a more efficient confirmation of his state of redemption than meditation or prayer. A frightening but promising symbolical term for this situation is that of the frontier, around the making or keeping or abolishing of which, geographically and ideologically, even the restlessness of our present existence seems to revolve.

When the time is ripe, the Churches of both denominations will begin to perceive that the new "reformatio" is not happening in theological structures of doctrine, but just here, in the approach and look towards the man of the new world epoch. This man is from the womb an actor in both camps because only in such contrariety, nay contradiction, the cosmos with its creator and redeemer simultaneously, unlocks itself to him. Up to the present, i.e. in the dusk of patriarchalism, this struggle between the flesh and the spirit has resulted either in apostasy, in consecration or in neurosis; instead of these extremes, the future demands the new, a three-dimensional, an inclusive visualisation of the redemptive fact—that the word was made flesh. Within this relation as it looks towards the miracle of the creation, there stands the angelic ladder, and not any longer on the ambiguous cleavages of the Roman-occident rebellion against the Eros. . . .

A Symptomatic Departure

Here, changes and events seep into our consciousnesses also. It is highly symptomatic for them that simultaneously with the Church-theatrical conversation (which is considering principles), but initially quite unconnected, at not a few places in Germany stage artists of Christian

persuasion have joined up in studios and play-groups. This is not in order to form an evangelical enclave within the theatre world, but to make a Christian statement in the effective radius of the Church, or from that direction, and with all the means at the disposal of the cultural theatre. This fact is, as it were, the touchstone for the theoretical encounter between the two forces. Wherever something new appears with authority, the conversation does not precede the appearance, nor vice versa! The two are simultaneous. The body that just joined the idea has within a decade become pleasingly manifold; but it remains noticeable that the phenomenon of Christian, we might even say ecclesiastical, stage work is closely tied up with their mutual sociological function, and this, in spite of differing forms of operation. Their sociological function results from the necessity to run productions even in very small towns and settlements, refugee camps and prisons; it results from the almost exclusively touring character of the companies and stages. They fulfil in this way a demand that can not, or only as an exception, be satisfied by the big stationary companies and their expensive tours.

A New but Varied Stage Type

Aims and practice of the new stage type are unfolded fanwise: from the liturgical to the evangelistic, from the classical to the polemical, from the congregational to the ecumenical. Across this variety in aim and style of the groups there runs, at another layer, their staggering in structure and economy. There were, or have been represented in the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Berufsbühnen" (the companies treated of here joined together in this organisation in the late summer of 1951 at Bethel) the one-man stage and the free-lance private enterprise as well as the studio in its economic and organisational dependence on Church institutions (e.g. the Akademien). There were the company organised on an occupational level, and the normal stage that runs "secular" shows too. A third example of great practical difficulties is shown in the fact that some companies have regional as well as non-regional ties. Experience has meanwhile shown that the stages of all species of style and structure serve, apart from their peculiar aims, always the preparation, the creation and intensification of a critical "theatre-mindedness" within the congregations, and thereby in the theatre itself. This service as an intermediary has obviously the promise of peacemaking, even where it initially seems to lead to a stronger confrontation of two so far exclusive "realms."

Cheap Objections

It is sometimes objected from the side of the Church that these groups are ununified and their artistic level unsatisfactory. These objections will bounce back against the critic: in the absence of tradition and a climate genuinely without bias, one just cannot expect a highwater level overnight. Pastor Wilken (Hamburg), until recently Chairman of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft's leader-circle, rightly pointed toward the economic side of the matter. In April 1954 he wrote an article "Is the Church again Missing

a Chance?" "Our stages," he says, "have to build up their funds, the properties and lighting from almost nothing—which the stationary subsidised theatres need not. If they want to get a well-known stage manager for a production, that demands more means. Additionally, the professional stages operating in the field of the Church are trying not only to stage religious plays. They want to stage a new type of actor as well to create the Church actor. All this costs—money."

Efforts to Start Cabaret

In spite of these and other difficulties, the professional companies working in the ecclesiastical field have in several respects shown greater avant-gardistic courage than many of the subsidised stationary and regional companies. Many plans, however, remain unfulfilled or are in the infancy. One of them is the creation of an established Christian open-air theatre; another a Christian cabaret. With regard to the latter there are some beginnings, and even some experiments, resulting mainly from the further development of the discussion piece and from some of the possibilities contained in the so-called "impromptu" programme. Here, especially with regard to big towns, seems to be an additional approach to more intimate productions.

The efforts to develop a style for the improvising play on the one hand and to find a stylistically suitable sequence of cabaret features on the other have found no satisfactory solution so far. There are various reasons. One of them is unquestionably the fact that the type of actor who dedicates his artistic proficiency to the service of evangelism, is generally not entirely suited for the lighter kind of cabaret entertainment and *conférence*—even when this is only in the antechamber of the central Biblical message. The cabaret, of course, lives largely on satire. Humour grows merely at its fringes. Satire, however, seems naturally to resist acceptance into the Christian applied art because in it, or in its traditional form, charity is so hard to discover. And charity above all it would have to be out of which a "Christian" cabaret could be born. In other words: one would want for a cabaret which—in contrast to the present-type cabaret—would cherish primarily humour, and satire only in the second place and then embedded in the former. To do that is not only a question of the actors but of the authors also. And this kind of authorship is difficult to find, especially in Germany. They would have to be able to aim, with charm and *élan*, at all those highriding characteristics and positions of the fellow-men from which the latter keep attacking the whole, intact world of traditional thoughtlessness. As an example, one would have to caricature not marriage, the main target of our jesters, but its opposite: the natural showing off of a non-conjugal sex relation, for instance. This would have to be done in a way not inductive of anger but of reflection.

In this connection, a multitude also of sociological and formal problems should be treated. But let it suffice to say that within the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Berufsbühnen" a working committee is engaged in studying this problem—so seriously that the practical attempt of

genuinely Christian cabaret can be launched as early as next year in one of the big towns in Germany.

Beginnings of Consolidation

The Church still regards with a certain reserve a dramatic movement that advances so far and that also differentiates itself in a friendly but conscious manner from the traditional amateur dramatic movement. This is very understandable. But so much the more do the first steps toward a new understanding and to even indirect co-operation deserve to be stressed.

After the first advances by Pastor Günter Rutenborn (Senzke) during the memorable Church Theatre Week at Hamburg in November 1950, a working committee under the chairmanship of Pastor Wolfgang Wehowsky began to study methodically the principles and practical questions arising from the mutual stirring of the lay Church movement and a theatre that had had enough of its own tentativeness. The Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany then created a special committee "Darstellende Kunst" in Bishop Lilje's "Kammer für die publizistische Arbeit." Very few of those concerned were aware what exactly was happening here. Meanwhile, the series of publications "Church and Theatre" (published by Chr. Kaiser, Munich) and the discussions taken up and started by the Evangelical Press Service's Information Service "Church and Theatre" (launched early in 1953) have, together with the concrete effects and reflections of conversations and production practice, irrefutably proved the life-impulse of the new movement. But it should not be forgotten that the practical work has been living on dedication and self-sacrifice by the artists, speakers and organisers as usually found in diaconal work only. The white-book of a martyrdom, often against the total lack of understanding of Church authorities, is yet unwritten! This increases the merit of some regional Churches, e.g. the Church of Braunschweig, whose initiative created the yearly, interdenominational "Week of the Religious Theatre"; and in the autumn of 1954 the Regional Church of Württemberg helped to realise the first Christliche Landesbühne, a Christian theatre covering the whole of the regional church. Oberkirchenrat Dr. Manfred Müller was the initiator of this scheme. It is surely no coincidence that this foundation took place in a geographical and spiritual area where ecclesiastical piety and scenic mimus seemed to have diverged particularly far, for contradictory constellations are always favourable to extraordinary events.

Summing Up: A Revolutionary Event

And an extraordinary event of still unguessed potentialities—not merely a new theme or a modern branch of evangelism, or a counterpart to the amateur dramatic movement—a revolutionary event, provoking reflection, is taking place here in the Christian theatre movement. It is vicarious and directive for the departure of that Church whose spirit is blowing inside and out of the constituted Church that comes down the

altar steps to the man of our century and speaks to his ears, eyes, and blood. Oh that we be worthy of this miracle and requite the love shown in—perhaps still incompetent and exploratory, with the rest of that love which is still glowing even in the doubtful and critical heart of our todayness!

Pasteur Daniel Atger, Drôme, France. Presbyterian Church of France. President of the Commission Art Dramatique des Equipes Unionistes. Dramatist.

France

DANIEL ATGER

In a country where the Church has ceased, since the Renaissance, to play the decisive cultural and institutional rôle which it had during the Middle Ages, it is very difficult to define the position of Religious Drama in a theatre which is basically secular—in so far as it is at all possible to set definable limits and assign a “proper sphere” to faith.

It is true that we have seen in France for some years past a renewal of interest in questions concerning Christian belief and the commitments and denials which it involves. One can certainly say that “God is in fashion” on the Paris stage and that an educated public, composed moreover mainly of agnostics, shows itself to some extent favourably disposed towards plays on religious subjects, so long as these plays “have no axe to grind.” In this way, some of the works of Claudel, Gabriel Marcel, Bernanos, Montherlant and other writers, setting forth important and at times extremely poignant spiritual conflicts, have achieved undeniable success.

But that an author speaks about God is not enough to qualify him as “a religious writer.” Atheists like Sartre or Salacrou have also had their “successes” in attacking these problems: one should, therefore, approach this popularity of “theatre-theology” with extreme circumspection.

At the same time, however, one should point out that works as deep as Christian (in the sense that the very drama which they present bear witness to Christian faith) as *Skipper Next to God* (*Maitre Après Dieu*) or *Le Dialogue des Carmélites*, or *Sur la Terre Comme au Ciel* have paved the way for a drama at pains to express the mysteries of faith in the language of art.

If now we turn our attention to the theatrical endeavours of the Church itself as one of the ways in which it seeks to give thanks to God, one can only be surprised by the lack of response accorded to them.

We shall leave it to the French Catholic delegates to describe for themselves the situation as their Church has found it and to tell us how, thank

to the efforts of the "Theophiliens" and other devoted groups, the tradition handed down from the Middle Ages of presenting Mystery Plays on the cathedral squares has been maintained.

As far as we Protestants are concerned, we have no cause to vaunt unduly our successes in the field of Religious Drama, but rather to offer an honest self-criticism.

Protestantism, it is true, is a minority religion in France, but that does not suffice to explain why it has made so few attempts at Religious Drama worthy of the name. And yet there has gone out from our churches an impressive body of theatrical writers, actors, producers whom one is apt, in certain circles, to regard as "renegades" precisely because they have devoted their talents to the theatre.

The truth is that an old and bad Protestant tradition is profoundly distrustful of an art which had its roots in the pagan-religious life of antiquity, and too many of our co-religionists in their ignorance of the true laws of the theatre, and of its demands, display towards it an extreme and unjust severity.

No doubt that is why the Church has done little to encourage the various efforts which have been made to restore to this art its place amongst the manifestations of faith.

We should recognise, however, that a change is taking place, and Protestantism today seems aware of the need seriously to reconsider its attitude to the problems raised by the existence of the theatre in its relation to Christian belief.

For far too long our Religious Drama has been confined to parish halls, and the few "sponsored" groups of amateurs have rarely managed to produce (and God knows in what conditions!) more than a carefully vetted repertoire, usually of a sadly mediocre artistic standard.

The so-called "evangelising" theatre movement (*théâtre d'évangélisation*) constitutes a step forward, but in confronting a wider audience the technical element has too often been neglected.

Here and there, however, we see the growth of amateur groups determined to rise out of the rut of mediocrity; and it is the appearance of these groups, several of which have attracted the attention of experts at regional or national theatrical competitions, which has led to the creation, within the Church Drama Group Union ("*les Equipes Unionistes*") of a Commission whose job is to co-ordinate their efforts.

This Commission has three objectives:

1. To co-ordinate the work of existing groups by putting them in touch with one another;
2. To provide for the printing and distribution of technical brochures to give the Groups advice, information, and the chance of extending their repertoires;
3. To assist in the professional training of amateur actors by organising camps and meetings with this end in view.

Despite the numerous obstacles which beset our path, and despite the

leeway which we have to make good to compete with other nations in this field, we have high hopes that we shall see in the near future a large number of Christian Theatre Groups capable of testifying to their faith by an art both genuine and provocative.

If we are putting up a bitter fight against an "art on the cheap," which would be the worst possible service which we could render, this is because we wish to ensure the victory of a very different conception of Religious Drama. And we hope that in the drive now taking place in our churches for a new Biblical and liturgical inspiration, a place will be found for valuable experiments in liturgical drama. This, however, with one or two exceptions, remains for the present a hope.

Rev. George Candlish, Edinburgh, Scotland. Minister of the Church of Scotland. Director of the Gateway Theatre.

Scotland

GEORGE CANDLISH

In recent years there has been a marked interest in drama within the Church in Scotland. There must now be about as many dramatic clubs attached to congregations as there are parishes. Some of these clubs regard their productions mainly as a social activity. Others, however, have been concerned not so much with three-act comedies in the church hall as with drama within the church itself; and in many cases they have made sincere and successful endeavours to present their plays as part of church service, proclaiming or interpreting Christianity through the medium of the drama.

For instance, the Dramatic Society of Lothian Road Church in Edinburgh have, for the past fifteen years, proclaimed the Christmas and Easter messages in their church, to crowded congregations, by means of plays—most of them written by the minister, the Rev. James Jardine. Kirkgate Church Dramatic Society of Leith have not been so much concerned with the greater Festivals of the Christian year as with such themes as Sunday Observance, Foreign Mission Service, Football Pools, and they now have to their credit the presentation of a remarkable series of "Sermon Plays." These have been written by the minister of Kirkgate, the Rev. James Scott Marshall, who regards them as experiments in the presentation of the Gospel Message and is fully convinced of their evangelistic value. A further instance, in a slightly different category, is this increasing relationship between drama and the Church is found in the fact that when St. Stephen's Parish Church, Edinburgh, recently marked the 125th anniversary of the opening of their church they did

with a service in which the main element was a play specially written for the occasion by Robert Kemp. Experiments in Religious Drama having a markedly native and local reference have been made by the Rev. John B. Logan in the Abbey Church, Coupar Angus, and have been of real significance and consequence.

Besides the activities of congregational dramatic societies, the work done a few years ago by the drama group of the Iona Community should be noted. They specialised in the group writing of Religious Plays under the leadership of Oliver Wilkinson.

The Church of Scotland was presented with a theatre in Edinburgh some ten years ago. Over these years various practical experiments were conducted in an endeavour to find the wisest use of this unique gift. As a result of these exploratory years and following an assessment of them, there are now three main elements in the activity of this Church-owned theatre.

1. There is a touring group of players who do not play in the theatre, but have it and its clubrooms as their headquarters. Their primary concern is with specifically Christian plays. They present these in churches on Sunday evenings during the winter months, not only in Edinburgh, but much further afield. Last season the play they presented was *The Death of Adam* by Terence Tiller. This group also plays in St. Giles's Cathedral during the Edinburgh International Festival. St. Giles's productions have included *A Sleep of Prisoners* (Fry), *Samson Agonistes* (Milton), *Cain* (Byron), and for this year Masefield's *Good Friday* is the play chosen.

2. The Gateway is also the headquarters of the Kirk Drama Federation, which is an association with a membership of over thirty Church of Scotland Dramatic Societies. Training classes, talks and discussions, the loan of scenery and lighting units are provided for the member clubs, to assist them in their work in their own parishes. One of the main aims of this Federation (as expressed in the Constitution) "to explore the uses of drama within the Church" is constantly in mind. The only time this Federation appears before the public on the Gateway stage is in the early summer when there is a "K.D.F." Festival.

3. The Gateway Company Limited, a full professional company, are responsible for the presentation of drama to the general public, playing in the theatre from late summer throughout the autumn and winter until the early spring. This company's primary aim is not the presentation of Christian plays, but they hold the wider brief of the production of "good" plays—with an emphasis on Scottish drama. Though the performances open to the public night by night and week by week have by no means been confined to Christian drama, over the years many religious plays have been staged, including the following: *When the Star Fell* (Kemp), *Everyman*, *Tobias and the Angel* (Bridie), *Good Friday* (Masefield), *The Firstborn* (Fry), *Jonah and the Whale* (Bridie), *The Golden Gate* (Icelandic), *He that Should Come* (Sayers), *The Three Temptations* (Williams), *Spark in Judea* (Delderfield), *A Bairn was Born* (Harvey), *The Little Minister*

(Barrie), *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Tell John* (Campbell), *A Sleep of Prisoners* (Fry), *Noah* (Obey), *Christmas in the Market Place* (Ghéon), *The Cocktail Party* (Eliot), *The Acts of St. Peter* (Bottomley), *Miracle at Midnight* (Fleming), *The Family Reunion* (Eliot), *Murder in the Cathedral* (Eliot), *It's Midnight Dr. Schweitzer* (Cesbron), *The Vigil* (Fodor), *The Zeal of Thy House* (Sayers).

Mr. Leonard Crainford, Toronto, Canada. Anglican. Television executive, theatre director, etc. Technical Adviser to the Christian Drama Council of Canada.

Canada

LEONARD CRAINFORD

There are many signs throughout Canada today of an increasing awareness of the value and use of drama in Christian education and evangelism. This can almost certainly be traced to at least three reasons. Firstly the recent growth and much wider spread interest in culture and the arts generally, and in the living theatre in particular. Secondly, the growing dissatisfaction within the churches themselves of entertainment like minstrel shows, concert parties and lightweight comedies with which many church organisations have busied themselves over past years. Thirdly, the dissatisfaction has also been felt, but not to so great a degree, with the inevitable pageant and narrated mime-play. The success, prestige and high standard of the Dominion Drama Festival, though not so apparent or direct, is a third reason. Then also it must be admitted that the informal and "unofficial" work in Religious Drama, at first within only the United Church of Canada but spreading by demand into the other denominations, of Miss Isobel Squires from England has been continuous, persistent and surprisingly extensive.

The pattern of life and the general prevailing conditions in Canada tend to make progress slow and in initial stages rather uncertain for any cultural movement or activity. It is a country of vast distances and, with the exception of southern Ontario and a part of southern Quebec, the population is proportionately small and quite sparse. Conditions of travel, particularly in winter, also add to the problem of "spreading the good work." There are many hamlets and villages where church services can be held only in the summer. It is insufficiently realised, even in Canada itself, as well as outside, that the nation is really only just emerging, and perhaps more true to say, has only recently emerged from the harsh struggle of pioneer life and the vast and fierce rate of commercial and industrial development which has tended to exclude practically all else

Though how to survive and where best to work are not the dominant problems of today as they were, the relentless pursuit of a higher standard of living and of all the mechanical comforts of life still make it difficult for cultural activities to receive their true emphasis or proportionate place in the nation's life. Until recently, culture has tended to belong to the more leisured and the more secure. The yearly pattern of life adds to the problem. It is the custom for young people to go to university whenever possible; the university year is short and crammed, and during the long hot summers the students work in hotels, on trains and ships, in hospitals and camps and in divers places, earning enough to carry them through the next year's study; older people work feverishly in the winter and then depart to country or lakeside cottage for two or three months in the summer. The slump of the early 'thirties is still keenly remembered.

All this means that time itself is short and the available period much curtailed in Canada for such a demanding and concentrated occupation as drama. Singing has been more developed and practised because of its less individual demands. The healthy swing from study to manual work causes participants in dramatic plays to look for strong virile plays of action and some plays from the countries with older culture and dramatic tradition appear to them at first sight as being rather "precious" or "arty."

However, despite all this, in every large centre across Canada drama is persistently and increasingly encouraged, mainly by the community programmes, branches of the various drama leagues and regional committees which form part of the Dominion Drama Festival organisation. Community Arts Councils are to be found and the extension departments of the universities usually cover dramatic study. All these naturally are not primarily interested in Religious Drama, but in line with the movement in world theatre today of poets and playwrights seriously to concern themselves with religious problems and the belief of man, Religious Drama holds a goodly share of the activities of these groups. Technical standards of presentation together with the standard of acting are continually being raised. This can be traced quite definitely to the work of the Dominion Drama Festival; the inspiring stimulus of the Stratford, Ontario, Shakespearean Festival and the dramatic work on "Stages 44-55" (a high-level C.B.C. weekly radio dramatic presentation), and to newly established professional repertory theatres like the Crest in Toronto and Vinelands Summer Theatre in the Niagara peninsula. The work of the highly polished and erudite French theatre groups in Montreal is also most important in this respect, as is the religious radio dramatic programme from Montreal called "The Way of the Spirit." It is in the areas of direction and particularly of writing that standards still remain low and, as is to be expected from experience in other countries, the standards in Religious Drama fall lamentably short of those for secular drama. Church groups dislike paying royalties and, having had until recently no guide to follow or standard to look up to, the choice of play is often disquietingly poor. The knowledge and skill that a director or producer must have, even if only in embryo, is too often quite unappreciated. There is a vast quantity

of non-royalty plays available, some unfortunately, and now so admitted from the Church publishing houses.

The picture, however, is not all gloomy: some excellent work in religious drama is frequently presented, and perhaps the Roman Catholic French-speaking groups are presenting the most outstanding. The yearly presentation of the Christmas story and the Easter story (direct descendant of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, England), the presentations of the Company of Pilgrims in Ontario, and of a group in Victoria, B.C., are also good examples. Blanche Hogg, with a training group in London, has also achieved fine results.

There is much dramatic activity among the various young people's organisations of the Churches. Their popular dramatic festivals and competitions have been gradually turning into festivals of one-act religious plays and here problems in adjudication arise.

Subsequent events have proved that the inauguration of the Christian Drama Council of Canada just over a year ago was timely, opportune and very much wanted. A warm response to really universal and strong Religious Drama has been revealed, but writers and playwrights are urgently needed. A play-writing competition organised by the Council has provoked much interest, and plays are coming in particularly well.

In its first year of work the C.D.C.C. has:

Established a library (each province will certainly need a library of its own).

Set up its national office in Toronto.

Nearly 450 members have enrolled—these are spread across every province including the North-West Territory.

Has received requests from 105 communities.

Has sent 130 packets of plays.

Has conducted special "workshops" or training schools in Toronto, London, Kitchener, Windsor, Montreal, Brantford and Hamilton.

Has conducted a summer school at Bellville.

Has presented a "February Week" of plays and demonstrations in Toronto.

Has given a month of drama in Montreal.

Has established a play-writing competition.

Quite a remarkable first year. The Council can be said to be just solvent but so much significant work remains to be done that a large amount of available money must be secured.

The Council has been set up as a national and nation-wide organisation. It is fully realised, however, that life, behaviour, and conditions vary considerably within the regions and provinces, and therefore it will be essential for provincial and/or regional branches to be set up each with its own autonomy bound to the national body in matters of general policy, and the maintenance of the highest standards in writing and presentation.

The Council is honoured and much increased in importance and

authority by having as Patrons-in-Chief the heads of all the main Protestant denominations, and it is officially recognised as the national body of reference for Religious Drama by the Boards of Education and Evangelism of the Churches.

There is hope for the future. The two most satisfying signs are the keenness and enthusiasm of the young folk in the Churches, and the increasing realisation that drama which has both Christian truth and dramatic verity can be a real part of the ministry of the Christian Church.

Mrs. Joan Tuckey, Dublin, Eire. Anglican. Teacher of Speech and Dramatic Art. Councillor of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain. Producer of amateur Religious Drama.

Eire

JOAN TUCKEY

It is just ten years since the first Religious Drama Groups were formed in Ireland; but with a Patron Saint such as Patrick, whose life and work are so rich in legend, it is inevitable that pageants should have flourished here before that date. Indeed, this year has seen another added to the list, this time a really thrilling "Pageant of St. Patrick," performed in the open air, with a script written by Michael MacLiammor and produced by Hilton Edwards, both of the famous Gate Theatre Company. But we still await a play about Patrick relating Ireland's preoccupation with the past to life as we have to live it today. The failure to find, or inspire, any native dramatist to write Religious Drama to fit our particular circumstances, and dealing with our special problems, seems to me to be one of the most serious aspects of Religious Drama in my country today.

The three principal cities, Belfast, Dublin and Cork, all have central Religious Drama Groups producing two or three plays a year and giving help and advice to smaller parochial groups when asked. There is, however, no official advisory body for the whole country, and no real co-ordination between the different groups.

It has been possible once or twice to hold a week-end school with lecturers from the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain, and some of our members have been privileged to attend the Annual Summer School in England, thus bringing fresh vision and knowledge to our own productions.

In Northern Ireland the Church of Ireland (Anglican) has been mainly responsible for the growth and encouragement of Religious Drama, and religious plays and pageants have reached a fairly wide audience of all denominations in most of the principal towns.

In Southern Ireland members of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches co-operate in the production of plays, the main activity being confined, however, to Dublin and Cork. In Cork members of the Roman Catholic Church have also staged several impressive religious plays on a semi-professional basis.

There have been productions in Cathedrals in both Belfast and Dublin, and Religious Drama has also found its way on to our professional stage, the Gate Theatre in Dublin having put on *The Cocktail Party* and *A Sleep of Prisoners*.

There is also evidence of considerable interest among educationalists, both north and south, in the value of Religious Drama as a teaching medium. An encouraging event recently was the production of a religious play in a church by members of the Dublin University Student Christian Movement.

Most of the Religious Drama in Ireland today has for its audience those who are already churchgoers (in this our situation may differ somewhat from that of other countries), therefore its chief aims must be to awake in them a fresh realisation of the meaning of their faith, and to make them more aware of the vital importance of their witness in the modern world. In this connection plays such as *The Gates of Hell* by Joyce Biddell, and more surprisingly, perhaps, *The Holly and the Ivy* by Wynyard Browne, have proved their worth to us. However, there still remains a vast field of unexplored possibilities both in methods of presentation and in the utilisation of native folklore and legend.

One of our greatest problems in Ireland is that of isolation. It is difficult to keep our standards high when the majority of our players and producers have never seen any really first-class productions of Religious Drama, or had any opportunity of exchanging ideas with others engaged in the same work. On the other hand we can say that Religious Drama is firmly rooted in Ireland today and we pray that it may play an increasingly important part in the witness and worship of the Church of Ireland.

*Miss Dorothy G. Beacom, Northern Ireland. School teacher.
Acts and Produces for the Religious Drama Society of the
Province of Armagh.*

Northern Ireland

DOROTHY G. BEACOM

Religious Drama in our country is in its infancy. The Religious Drama Society (Down, Dromore and Connor) was the first society which was founded in 1946. This was a small group of people who, realising the

value of Religious Drama, obtained the blessing of the bishops of the dioceses and the society was inaugurated at a crowded public meeting which was addressed by Rev. Rex Parkin. From this beginning the society slowly but surely gathered strength, overcame many obstacles, converted many doubters and has now become firmly established as an integral part of the Church life of our people. The Lord Bishop of Connor, by his encouragement, interest and advice has helped to foster the society and enabled it to develop along its present lines. The Lord Bishop of Kilmore is also a tower of strength as he is the author of two pageants produced by the society in St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, the first one "The Prayer Book Pageant" for the four hundredth anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer, and the second "A Pageant of the Holy Bible" for the Festival of Britain. The very fact that the Festival of Britain Committee for Northern Ireland approached us and requested such a production as part of their programme clearly showed that our society was regarded by the authorities as being an important factor in the lives of the people of Northern Ireland.

In 1951 when it became apparent that the work the society had accomplished interested others outside the joint dioceses, the committee approached the Lord Primate of all Ireland and the bishops whose dioceses make up the ecclesiastical Province of Armagh and asked their permission to extend the society to take in the entire province. This was readily and unanimously agreed to by the bishops and in September 1951 the society officially became the Religious Drama Society (Province of Armagh). This enlargement of the society was a big step forward and, although the society was young, the committee felt that in view of the growing interest it was the duty of the society to widen its borders so that parish groups might be helped and encouraged in their productions. Owing to difficult local conditions this society is entirely confined to members of the Church of Ireland. The committee have given lengthy consideration to this point but feel it must remain this way for the present.

A library is maintained by the society where anyone, whether a member of the society or not, may borrow plays or books on Religious Drama. Lighting equipment is available for hire to parish groups and the society has a good-sized wardrobe, although these costumes cannot be hired out as we have not the facilities for cleaning or mending.

When choosing a play we must be very careful—many parishes are closed to us if we portray the Cross as was the case in the play *The Figure on the Cross* which we produced last year.

Recently a society has been launched by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

A committee called by the Bishop of Connor is planning a pageant to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of Cranmer and our society has been asked to take part.

I think Religious Drama is here to stay, not only as a means of teaching, but also as an inspiration to those who take part.

Vice-Chancellor's Reception

After luncheon, during which the discussion did anything but subside, delegates had the privilege of being received by the Vice-Chancellor to tea in New College cloisters. Here an aesthetic pleasure, wholly unexpected, awaited them, for New College Chapel now contains Epstein's noble *Lazarus*, the intensity of whose conception recalled Obey's moving play upon the same theme.

Further reports from countries occupied that part of the evening which was not devoted to individual conversations.

The morning of Tuesday, July 26th, was devoted to two speeches; one by Pastor Barnard, who, under his nom-de-plume, Guillaume van der Graft, is well known in Holland as a religious playwright; the second by the Rev. Moelwyn Merchant, English lecturer at the University College of South Wales, Cardiff, author of several works of literary criticism and himself a playwright.

We print here only brief résumés of these two contributions: they were both of considerable importance and we hope to reprint them in full in later issues of Christian Drama.

Drama in Church (1)

W. BARNARD

The Gospel does not describe Our Lord as a hero who knows no fear nor despair. On the contrary, He joined in the questions you can, for instance, find in the Psalms. That means that He made Himself familiar with the real human situation. Now this situation which He shared essentially a dramatic one. By that, drama in church is justified according to the Scripture. As the completeness of human life penetrated to the heart of the holy history, liturgy—based on that very history—cannot be merely testimony and preaching. Liturgy must be a matter of questioning as well as answering: that is to say, it has to be dramatic.

If Christian liturgy can be described as a drama, it is nevertheless necessary to point out the differences between Religious Drama in general (for instance among the Gentiles) and Christian drama particularly. It might be shown that the gulf between tragedy and comedy is essentially non-Christian.

The next point to be considered is the way of going through this drama of playing the part in liturgy. Can one be true in drama? But what truth? Is it a matter of accordance of two realities—"idea" and "reality" for instance? Or should it be the revelation of things which have been hidden up to now? One could use the Greek word "aletheia"—if we can believe the etymology proposed by Martin Heidegger (from "a" = not)

and “lanthanein” = to conceal). In liturgy and drama as well the point is not that one should identify oneself with an ideal ego, but that one should participate in a secret which is to be revealed, a hidden reality to communicate—by acting. In a way one can speak of “lying the truth”! If we recognise the value of “questioning” and “lying,” of *playing* in a word, we find ourselves in the good company of children. “Playing” means really employing (and enjoying) freedom. Here you can think of the Apostolic idea of the freedom of the Children of God. The liturgical room is in a sense a nursery room.

About the practice of Religious Drama in the Church it can be said, in general, that three possibilities are to be discerned. First—the play of a “normal reality” against a background of Biblical drama (Christopher Fry: *A Sleep of Prisoners*). Second—the Biblical play against a background of liturgical drama. Third—the play which is involved in the liturgy itself. Of course several variations are to be looked at. I merely need to mention *Murder in the Cathedral* where the building itself (just as in *A Sleep of Prisoners*) plays its part and a historical situation is placed against the background of the liturgical room as a whole. The same setting is to be found in Martinus Nijhoff’s Whitsun play *The Garden of the Saviour*: a Biblical drama, this play, also against the background of the Church in its entirety. (Where in the report other examples are mentioned, the lecturer has not in mind to suggest that their quality comes up to these modern classics.)

Drama in Church (2)

(Lecture Notes)

W. M. MERCHANT

The necessity to examine the conditions in which drama may properly be played in church. This can best be done by comparing the immediate sources of our liturgical drama in the medieval period with the remoter Religious Drama of Israel and Greece: the dramatic pattern of Psalm 24, of a Greek tragedy and of the Mass.

The dramatic elements within the ceremonial of the liturgy: to what degree are the symbolic and mimetic gestures of the celebrant (e.g. within the Prayer of Consecration) “dramatic” in nature? If they are dramatic, did they, in fact, give rise to, or influence dramatic forms independent of the liturgy? Are interpolated dramatisations (“tropes”) properly to be considered as sources of later religious plays?

Expository and didactic elements in the liturgy: the *Quem quaeritis*

trope, even in its shortest form at the Introit of the Easter Mass, is the expansion of a moment of pure worship in the direction of dramatic "explanation." The appearance of the vernacular in these tropes increases the expository element. The didactic intention of the sermon appears to be a source of didactic Religious Drama, i.e. morality as opposed to liturgical drama proper.

The Mass appears to fall into a natural "five-act" pattern; does this justify the phrase "the drama of the Mass"? Is there any real analogy between liturgical actions and rites in the church and our exploration of religious and philosophic themes in the theatre?

The religious and theological significances of the dramatic categories of comedy and tragedy.—In our Jacobean drama both comedy and tragedy were used to explore metaphysical themes; in medieval Religious Drama there is also an intermixture of comic elements: cf. the so-called "scene of comic relief," such as the "knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*" with this comedy in such plays as the Second Wakefield Shepherds' Play.

When all the dramatic elements in the liturgy have been taken into account, either as sources for Religious Drama or as analogies to its growth, a fundamental distinction remains: dramatic presentation depends upon "fictional" qualities which demand terms such as "imitation," "illusion on the stage," "impersonation" or "representation"; a liturgical act may use certain dramatic means, even some mimetic actions, but its core is not "imitation" but the showing forth of fact—the Mass, the Eucharist, the Holy Communion has as its central verity the Real Presence. This involves a consideration of the instruments, theatre and church, by which the two acts, theatric and liturgical, are performed. The theatre in its various forms has evolved as the characteristic instrument of fictional drama; similarly, liturgical necessity has imposed certain architectural patterns on the church; some of these forms and patterns in church and theatre are mutually exclusive.

This argument leads to the contemporary dilemma of Religious Drama: the medieval Church found certain dramatic developments, such as the more or less elaborate tropes, legitimate extensions of liturgical worship; certain dramatic acts were equally clearly inappropriate for presentation in church, and they were properly taken over and developed by the craft guilds. But the modern age appears to have reached a point of stability in liturgical development and it is difficult to foresee the attitude either of the worshipping congregation or of ecclesiastical authority to dramatic interpolations in the liturgy, similar to the growth of the tropes, the Easter Sepulchre, the Nativity celebrations, which were found throughout medieval western Europe.

What, then, are the dramatic forms which we may hope to foster in our churches (aside from the merely antiquarian re-presentation of medieval examples) without doing violence to the church's fundamental purpose of liturgical worship by importing forms and dramatic attitudes appropriate only to the theatre? [*Some of these questions are expanded in "Retrospect below."*]

Discussion

During the afternoon in the discussions which followed these two deeply-thought speeches, the Bishop of Chichester reminded delegates of a meeting he had convened before the end of the world war, at which two questions were considered. The first: What kind of play is right to produce in a church? The second: What liberty will the Church give to the poet?

It was the late Laurence Binyon at that meeting who stated that the dramatist must accept the limitations of ecclesiastical architecture, and of the nature of worship, while it was generally agreed that writers must be free to express religious truth as they see it, but must realise that if they fail to satisfy the *informed* members of the community for which they write, then they have failed.

The Bishop added "Christians should welcome treatment of serious themes in the ordinary theatre and should not require that these satisfy all points of the Christian demand."

Pastor Helweg (Denmark) described how he discriminated between the secular and the liturgical elements in his church plays by his use of font, pulpit, etc., as well as of altar. With this statement Mr. Martin Browne and the Bishop concurred, and thought there was room for interesting experiment on the periphery of liturgical worship, particularly in the processional play. Dr. Gutkelch described the "Altar-Motet," a development in which he was interested in Berlin, a half-liturgical, half-improvised form, which he thought had real possibilities of usefulness. Pastor Atger (France) hoped that what he described as the "dis-incarnated spirituality" of the French Protestants might benefit by a greater use of the church as the place for the re-enactment of the drama of Redemption.

Shakespeare at Stratford

In the evening most of the delegates proceeded to Stratford-on-Avon where they saw a performance of *Macbeth* and, primed beforehand by a briefing from Mr. Merchant, came home full of fresh enthusiasm for Shakespeare as a religious dramatist. It was a great and cleansing experience to move from our own confused and, by now, rather fatigued attempts to understand the true function of drama, into the matchless range of Shakespeare's language and to hear the authentic voice of one great enough to bear the "burden of the mystery," great enough to exercise that "negative capability" which Keats praises as the excellence of "a man capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."

Rev. P. W. Turner, Leeds, England. Priest of the Church of England. Dramatist.

On Wednesday morning, July 27th, following upon the performance of his play, the Rev. Philip Turner spoke to delegates on the theme

Drama as Medium of Evangelism (1)

P. W. TURNER

I speak as a parish priest from a North of England industrial city.

The Problem

In such a parish, the Church touches a tiny minority. In approaching the majority there are two principles:

1. The non-churchgoing artisan thinks that he is a Christian, meaning that he is tolerant. To him, God is an "easy-going fellow." The Church, a club for the pious, is irrelevant. The problem is to show that Christianity is relevant in life, and that Christ is to be met in the Church.
2. The artisan will not attend any church show on ecclesiastical or neutral property.

The evangelistic task is "to preach Christ wherever men and women normally gather together." In Leeds this means factory, public house, Working Men's Club, home, street.

Dramatic Evangelism in these four places

I speak from experience of the last three only. In them, specialised drama is a good evangelistic medium, offering four advantages:

1. People come for a play more readily than for other evangelistic activities. This is proved by contrast between plays and talks given on a mobile stage, film-strips and plays in public houses, and by large audiences in clubs.
2. Audiences once present stay, despite adverse weather. This is true of unpromising audiences, exemplified by the London "teddy-boys."
3. As a teaching medium, it can show uneducated people the truth and help them to act, as is demonstrated by enquiries resulting from a play performed in prison.
4. It is a fine act of witness.

Type of Play

It needs to be:

1. Short, for the open air.
2. Fast-moving, to hold attention despite distractions.

3. Simple, for an unintellectual audience.
4. Modern in setting, for an audience who cannot trace an historical parallel; everyday and local in detail and dialogue.
5. Concrete in religious content, dealing with the church round the corner, because the artisan is to meet God in the local church, and can only see the relevance of religion in terms of a visible community.

Such plays may be crude, like the comic strip. They need to be good religion, forthright, and gripping.

Experience shows drama to be a way of reaching those whom the priest can touch in no other way.

Herr Horst Behrend, writer, of West Berlin, Federal Republic of West Germany, Director of the Vaganten Theatre, Berlin, a Christian Repertory Theatre touring Berlin, both East and West Zones, spoke of his experiences in the formation and maintenance of the Vaganten Theatre as an evangelistic endeavour.

Drama as Medium of Evangelism (2)

HORST BEHREND

It was during my long imprisonment in Russia that I conceived the idea of starting my own theatre for Religious Drama. When I was allowed to perform a religious play (albeit an incomplete one) of my own, before thousands of soldiers and officers in the camps, it became abundantly clear to me that there was real room for spreading the message of the Gospel through *the theatre*, and that it was a great mistake that the Churches had so far stayed very much out of the field.

And so, under unspeakable difficulties, the priest and poet Günter Rutenborn and I started in February 1949, at the time of the blockade, and currency change, the building of the Vaganten-Bühne in Berlin.

We have played there for the last six and a half years only with professional players—and ask first and foremost of our prospective actors and actresses that they are good players, and not whether they are Christians or not. Because we look *first* for ability—and so we look, we must look, in the first place for those players who know their job—who have control of their speech, their body, and their performance.

I know that in this I must be in disagreement with a number of people—perhaps even some here. But may I recall the words of my good friend, the poet and theologian, Armand Payot, who said “My dear Horst Behrend, I want my plays to be performed by professionals. If these are Christians all the better; if they are not Christians maybe they will one day, through their work on Christian plays, become Christians.”

And in this way, despite setbacks, the Vaganten have worked in Berlin.

I do want to stress here that we are conscious of God's blessing in our work, without any doubt.

The Vaganten-Bühne aims especially to reach out to politically and socially crushed people—to refugees (in West Berlin there are at the moment still one hundred refugee camps with sixty to eighty thousand East Zone refugees, of which approximately forty thousand are not yet recognised and who wait pathetically anything up to two and a half years without work for recognition as political refugees), or we play in prisons: for several years now every Wednesday I am in the Youth Prison Berlin-Plötzensee and work with the boys (approximately 18–21-year-old criminals), or I read to them, or let them perform themselves, or we go to the blind: we have also played for the deaf and dumb.

I have often been asked what our programme includes, and I have usually answered: "From the poet Ringelnatz to the Old Testament." Yes, ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that we must have a far broader and deeper outlook, especially those of us who call ourselves the Church of Christ.

Above all let us not forget *humour* in our work. In a chapter of one of my unpublished novels I let one of the characters say that it is a good deed before God to encourage at least one human being to laughter every day—to laughter in a *good* sense of course.

And I believe that true humour, even that which reaches you from the stage (which after all represents the world), which reaches you as audience or listeners—this humour can be a healing for poor and suffering mankind. It is our fault if we do not make sufficient use of this especial gift of God—because a starchy Christianity belongs to a grandmother's back-parlour and not to a young and vital Christian community.

We play in churches only those plays which are suitable for such surroundings, like Christopher Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners*—this wonderful work about four prisoners of war who are, during the last war, locked into a church, and there before the altar have "Biblical" dreams which they re-enact as in a half-dream before the altar. The Vaganten performed this dream-play at the last German Evangelical Church Assembly in Leipzig in the summer of 1954, and the full meaning of this difficult piece, of one of our most important Christian European poets, was revealed and shared with the suffering people of the East Zone. I have decided to present to poet Christopher Fry for this play alone the "Jochen Klepper Memorial Tablet" in silver, for the year 1954.

Or we play the Tobias legend by the German author Josef Magnus Wehner, or again and again the little Apostle play by Max Mell, or the rustic play by Count Leo Tolstoy: *Wovon Wir Menschen Leben*; Günther Rutenborn's Biblical play *Im Zeichen Des Jona* has been performed often in churches and other places. As latest addition we shall be giving Edzard Schaper's *Die Neunte Stunde* and Manfred Hausman's legendary play *Der Fischbecker Wand Teppich*.

Not long ago we presented with much success Hausman's play *Hafenbar*. In this, two Salvation Army sisters go into a dockland bar.

and try to convert some sailors. In this piece the action is often pretty rough: while the first act takes place in the bar, the second is a highly-coloured scene in the back room of a dockland prostitute. We started a lot of controversy through these performances, but we wanted to show people: "Look! Such is life."

I must still just mention a short "duet" by Walter Gutkelch-Bethel, who has attached himself in a very special way to Religious Drama. In this play Mathilde Wrede, the Finnish-Swedish nursing sister, goes into the cell of a multiple murderer and there, at the "right" hour—without sentiment, pathos or false piety—she knows how to give the forlorn and God-forsaken murderer the deciding words of comfort. This play, lasting only forty-five minutes, you should all, ladies and gentlemen, experience in a prison, and see how great the effect before criminals is. The piece is called *Der Weg Des Hallonen* and has already been performed through the Vaganten some years ago in England.

We need *short* plays, and I hope shortly to produce a few. Plays that concentrate more and more on the central part of the Message—I think here of five-minute plays with Biblical, but also with non-Biblical, action. In all our exertions, however—and I want to make this quite clear—we are very definite that Christian Drama must be complete in itself, and cannot and must not be a substitute for the sermon.

Once we have found the way, with a good religious play, to church-going, and particularly non-church-going, people, let us then think with the great German Kultur-Diakone Johann Sebastian Bach, who once in the middle of his work said:

"To praise God—that is our duty."

To praise God, that is our duty! Maybe we ought to tell ourselves these words each day, and pass them on, as we go to work to set the drama into the centre of the Christian message.

Ladies and gentlemen, I come from the East—and as one who was christened with the water of the Oder (my cradle was Stettin) and who has lived since his first year in Berlin, may I conclude with a greeting from all my colleagues from East and West Berlin, right in the disagreements of our time, and give you the courageous words of Luther that the Vaganten-Buehne-Berlin have adopted as their motto:

"Should the world end tomorrow, yet let us plant our apple-tree today."

Factory Discussion Piece

In obedience to the principle of Dotheboys Hall, to learn by doing, the delegates then proceeded to the small quadrangle of Lincoln College, where, in the open, the New Pilgrims presented K. M. Baxter's short discussion piece for a steel factory, *T'Other Shift*, as an example of the kind of play this sort of work demands.

On Thursday afternoon delegates met for a discussion on the Aims of Religious Drama, opened by Rev. Patrick McLaughlin, who had been one of the members of the Conference held two years ago at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, and who is Warden of St. Anne's House, Soho, and Priest in Charge of St. Thomas's Church, Regent Street, London, where many religious plays of importance, including A Sleep of Prisoners, have had their first performance.

Aims of Religious Drama

PATRICK MCLAUGHLIN

The only legitimate aim of Religious Drama is to be authentic and complete drama.

Man is created in the image of God, i.e. he is *by creation* not merely corporeal, not merely animal, but also spiritual; and since he is *spiritual* he is three-dimensional—i.e. he lives indeed in space and time, but also in *eternity*.

Repeat: he *is* spiritual, *he lives in eternity by virtue of creation*, and of redemption.

Man needs redemption, not to make him spiritual nor to link him with eternity, but to bring him into the Kingdom of Heaven (which is quite another thing).

True drama, then, must represent man "in the round," i.e. as a three-dimensional being, living in a three-dimensional universe; cognisant of this fact, or else suffering the consequences of ignoring it.

And in fact all, or most, European drama did this, until the seventeenth century when, largely in reaction from the ways of religion, society abjured discussion of eternity, and concentrated its attention on time-space (especially space); this was immediately reflected in the drama of the period: in England (Restoration comedy—Sheridan—Romantics); France; and in Germany (and note the flattening of dramatic style by the proscenium arch).

Today we welcome the return to fuller recognition of what man is, and to the fuller recognition of this in drama. Tribute is due to those who studied and revised medieval plays (especially Ben Greet), but above all to Ibsen; and tribute due therefore to Eliot, Sayers, Williams, Fry.

For Religious Drama is authentic drama cognisant of Eternity: It is *not* the same as "dramatic religion," nor is it a "medium of evangelism" nor an "extension of the pulpit." Rather is the converse true.

The Church lives, neither by tradition nor by Scripture, but by the liturgy of which Scriptures are constituent and normative.

Liturgy is the dramatic presentation of God's saving acts recapitulated in Christ's life, passion, death and resurrection set forth in a mystic preaching is the critical exposition of this, but liturgy excels, exceeds, transcends preaching exactly as the *whole* person exceeds, transcends

conscious person—Religious Drama excels, transcends “social” drama (or criticism) in the degree that it represents the whole human situation: it is “religion” if it does this, whether on a Biblical theme, or not.

The Discussion Continued

Pastor Daniel Atger continued the discussion

One cannot enclose *life* and *art*, which is a perpetual seeking after that which has not yet been defined, nor can one assign to them precise aims.

On the other hand, it is possible to discover what are the aims of a Christian when he writes plays, translates them, or produces them.

1. At the roots of a dramatic work of any worth, there is first of all the desire of an artist wishing to encounter the adherence and win the assent of his public, to win their friendship, to communicate to others what he bears and brings to fruition in the depths of his own being. Art presupposes the desire to communicate, whether conscious or unconscious, and this is particularly the case with dramatic art.

Our first aim will be this *exchange* with the public, which is a grace of God, who does not wish that man, His creature, should be *alone*.

In this way we escape from the false alternative of art for art’s sake, on the one hand, or art simply as a means to an end, on the other.

2. Today, the theatre’s field of action has narrowed considerably. Art has cut itself off from the people. What is known as “the public” is, in the last resort, nothing but a little group of intellectuals or middle-class people whose culture demands art which is developed in a hot-house.

It is without doubt the specific vocation of the Christian in the theatre to give back to those who have lost it their fundamental right to culture, beauty, art.

3. We must, finally, according to the words of St. Paul, “consider others as above ourselves,” and “others,” they are also the authors, actors and the “non-Christian” public who, when they submit themselves to the double problem of artistic *communion* and of *respect for the public*, participate also in that eager searching after “the creation which sighs (often unknowingly) for its redemption.”

Madame Maria Scibor, Paris, France, herself a musician and producer, who worked closely with Paul Claudel, then spoke.

“What are the aims of Religious Drama?”

The drama is a work of art and art, as such, can have only one object, to be fully, inspirationally what it sets out to be.

Can Religious Drama do anything for religion? Religious Drama will not help religion if it is undertaken with the idea of expedient propaganda—for all propaganda creates an uneasiness that can quickly become disgust. Mediocrity can be no part of the art of tragedy. It demands genius. There is no question of writing religiously inspired plays as one

writes detective novels. (I am not speaking of sponsored "theatre naturally, which must remain "sponsored.")

Religious Drama can be placed in two categories. One, the simple and primitive . . . the Mystery Plays of the Middle Ages. The other a development, such as the works of Paul Claudel, Bernanos, T. S. Eliot, etc.

But in both cases the origin is pure and of the highest inspiration.

If one uses art as a means to an end, however laudable that end, it will inevitably kill the art.

The Renaissance was a proof of simple faith degenerating into dogma and controversy. Religious Drama degenerated through the Baroque and died in the era of Saint Sulpice.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century it has soared wonderfully thanks, primarily, to Paul Claudel who, as a young man, wrote his first dramas sitting on straw in his parents' barn, his only aim being to liberate the thoughts that he could not contain. It has taken fifty years, fifty years of mockery and lack of understanding, for his theatre to reach the public. Unhappiness and suffering have released the modern man's appetite for something more than the adulterated sweetmeats put before him for so long. As well as Claudel we have Bernanos, with his *Dialogue of the Carmelites*, Bresson's masterpiece, the film *Diary of a Country Priest*, and the great English poet-dramatist T. S. Eliot.

From a practical point of view it is for us who wish to serve the theatre, and by this means serve God, to study dutifully and carefully the works of these men of genius, to impregnate ourselves with the emanation of their inspiration, so that we may be able to bring light to an actor or producer on anything that may seem obscure to him, for he will be the one to give full value to the words, the speeches, and the author's hidden intuitive meaning will be made clear in action.

For the drama only comes to life when the spectator finds himself in spiritual harmony by the impact of contact.

I had the joy of experiencing such moments when I was singing a solo on the stage during the occupation of France in a theatre that was so crowded that one could see the breath of the actors. From where I stood in the wings it was easy to perceive that the whole audience was shivering.

A long while afterwards I knew that many of these lives had been influenced by these performances.

Can one wish for a greater reward?

Re-entry

Here Mr. McLaughlin re-entered the discussion, underlining one or two points made by Pastor Atger, Madame Scibor, and others. He urged us to remember the significance of "Religion has returned to the theatre. Why? Because events have shaken the public mind open to a third dimension. Therefore the theatre can again present plays of religious character, *but* drama is our concern, and we must obey its laws. Drama must be *metaphysical*. Life, in Time and Space alone, is not enough

Drama is *potent* in the fragmented culture of our time. The theatre must become fully religious. The theatre is where the truth of man is presented to men.

Art is the statement of a vision—it is contemplative, not active.

During the Conference, delegates were increasingly conscious of their good fortune in having the Bishop of Chichester (President of the World Council of Churches) to fill the rôle of older statesman. He now undertook the onerous task of

Summing Up

THE LORD BISHOP OF CHICHESTER

During these five days I have shared a rich spiritual experience, largely through personal contact. We have received reports on conditions in different countries, exchanged information, and had opportunities of illumination and inspiration from people vitally concerned with Religious Drama. We have been able to see plays specially produced for our benefit, to hear talks and to take part in discussion and prayer.

The modern revival of Religious Drama is not more than thirty-five years old, and is spreading steadily. Any exchange of ideas on this scale would have been impossible before the war and indeed for some years after it, but now it is most opportune.

We are all thankful to authors and actors in the theatre today, so many of whom do their work with a real spiritual outlook and a consciousness of their responsibility for the spiritual and cultural side of life. Ten years ago I was in Hollywood, and attended a big dinner, where Mr. Basil Rathbone said: "You know, the Churches ought to make a far more direct approach to managers and financiers engaged in cinema activity, and if you were to thank them for all they have done so far, that at least would make a good beginning."

We should also be thankful for the change in the attitude of the Church to the theatre, but we must tell the Churches that there is still very much more they can do in that field. The Christian Church has a very real responsibility for culture as an integral part of life. What we need is more and better Christians in all walks of life. The Church's responsibility is of a very special kind. It is concerned with an exaltation of life.

The Church and the public should also realise that in the West as a whole and Europe in particular our whole culture is founded on our religion. If Christianity goes, the whole of European culture will go as well, and it will be replaced not by humanism but by barbarism. It will take a very long time for a new culture to emerge.

I think we can say with gratitude that there is a new interest and contact

between the Church and the theatre. They are not yet married, but they are shyly "walking out."

We began the Conference by considering the functions of the drama and ended with its aims. First, I will consider drama in church, next drama as a medium of evangelisation, and finally, Religious Drama in the theatre.

A valuable distinction was drawn, and drama and worship shown to have been always separate. Drama in church is *art* and must achieve a very high standard. There is the drama that stems from the liturgy and looks always to the altar, the font or the pulpit. There is also para-liturgical drama, which may come before or after an office. Here are many possibilities of experiment and flexibility.

Drama in church should be used to set forth the great facts of the Christian revelation, the Lives of the Saints, or on certain occasions, historical pageants or chronicles for church anniversaries, which do diverge slightly from the facts of the Gospel, but are centred in the Christian truth, which is the real point. This general limitation should not exclude occasional parables like Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners*, but any of these plays has a link with the audience and with the life of the Church.

We should be very sensitive about the quality of the plays and of the presentation, and advice should be taken from experts on all levels, including the theological, and the author should accept the limitations of the church building. Plays with a certain ceremonial, formal character are most suitable. There are limitations of sight and sound which must be accepted and no alteration of the church architecture should be attempted. All plays presented in church should expect the participation of the congregation. As far as the actors are concerned, they are good actors and willing to act in church, I personally do not ask whether they are good practising Christians.

Among the writers, some are less known than others, and quality varies, but if the producers' standard is high, then the writing will improve and plays will be forthcoming if the demand is made known. Well-known writers should be asked to help, and I have found that artists are always glad to feel that they are wanted and useful. They take it as a tribute to their art, and are glad to share in the life of the Church.

Drama as a Means of Evangelisation

Drama organised by the Church is produced in the street, in the public house, in the factory or the prison, and anywhere there are people. In the Middle Ages they played scenes from the Old and New Testament. Conditions today are very different, but it is still quite proper that the plays should have a purpose behind them, as they are closely connected with the priest and the congregation. Here a high standard is essential. The attention of the audience must be secured, and this, which used to be done by means of humour, is now done by a change of language. The terms used must be intelligible to the particular audience. Simplification does not mean watering down, but fitting the words to the audience.

The question arises as to whether these plays are works of art. Sometimes they can be, and we hope that more and more will be as time goes on. The artist is not simply moving in his ivory tower, but following certain rules of his art, and if he is a genius his play will be a work of art. We need the right models and more experiments. These plays are acts of witness, intended to catch the interest, but having a purpose. They differ from those written for church or theatre. Script writers for this kind of thing are like medieval ballad-writers, where tradition grew by practice and great poets emerged.

There is the question of copyright, which should always be taken into consideration when producing a play or translating it for production.

The church community is responsible for, and must stand behind, both types of play, supporting the writers as well as the actors.

Religious Drama in the Theatre

This aspect of drama is very important to us. Twenty years ago Granville Barker was at Chichester, very depressed about the English theatre, but interested in Religious Drama. He thought the only hope for the theatre was in religion, and we have seen instances of this abroad. Thus the Church should recognise its responsibility here also.

These times are very encouraging for the presentation of the Christian religion. There is a great opportunity for "searching" dramas (not propaganda). We must face the facts of ordinary life, seek to find divine significance in everyday events, and consider the unpredictability of our lives, and we welcome plays which deal with these points. We should call upon dramatists generally to deal with such themes.

Sometimes, one wonders whether there ought not to be a "church theatre," a redundant church seconded for the purpose that is, of presenting plays for church performance. If we issue a plea to writers, managers and producers for the best they can give we will get it. There is a definite range of opinion in the theatre and the Church.

Finally, some weeks later, the Rev. W. M. Merchant broadcast a retrospective account of the Conference which he allows us to reproduce here, by courtesy of the B.B.C.

Retrospect

W. M. MERCHANT

International conferences can be dull and even sterile affairs, but this conference was set in a human framework which made it anything but dull; for it opened with a performance of *Murder in the Cathedral* in the University Church, after which Mr. Eliot chatted quietly and informally with the delegates; and it ended with the presentation of the Klepper

Memorial Medal to Mr. Christopher Fry. This is an award given annually to the author whose play has been most successful during the previous season and Christopher Fry received the award for *A Sleep of Prisoners*. It is a matter of some pride that a distinguished play, commissioned by churches in this country, should have been regarded as the most influential Christian play of the year in Germany and Eastern Europe.

Between these two dominating figures of Eliot and Fry we moved a week among the humbler writers and a good deal of fascinating exploration was achieved. For, by the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation some forty-five delegates, representing fifteen countries, had been brought together under the direction of the Bishop of Chichester and Mr. May Browne. There was a strong representation of Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists, of continental Lutherans and Calvinists; in fact, a significant cross-section of Christian worshippers. Their pooled experience ranged from the most sophisticated experience in the professional theatre to the humblest exponents of Biblical plays presented in a tiny chancel or parish hall.

But the overwhelming impression of the week, one that I want urgently to convey to you now, was the richness of the field of Religious Drama, the comparative poverty of our own naïve and very often smug attempt at cultivating it. The Conference should certainly have shaken the complacency of any British exponents of this art—so far we have tentatively scratched the surface, no more.

The avowed objectives of the Conference had been quite humble: to find their way; to exchange experiences from our recent productions in professional and amateur theatres, to explore some obvious practical problems, and to establish contacts between countries. The expectations were wholly fulfilled; friendships which were established there between members of different delegations will of themselves ensure that there will be ample knowledge of our various ways with Religious Drama, and by the time the second international Conference takes place, we hope in three years' time, and probably in Switzerland, there will be a foundation of living opinion and experience on which to build.

Meanwhile, there has to be hard thinking and practice in each country. Forgive me if I sound a little analytical and objective. To be concerned with religious matters is no excuse for woolly thinking, nor is it to be charitable to put up with the third-rate because it is done in the name of the Church, or because the hearts of those concerned are in the right place—their heads need to be brought into play as well! Let us try to get of all to be clear about the meaning of Religious Drama, its origin and proper object.

It is obvious that even the simplest religious service has its ceremonial and therefore a measure of dramatic content. Whether we think in terms of the simple alternation of hymn, scripture lesson, prayer and corporate worship, or the much more elaborate movement of priests and ministers in the sanctuary, both eye and ear are to some degree called into play. Worship has an essentially dramatic element. Sometimes, religions ex-

man ours have achieved very elaborate, almost theatrical patterns. Read Psalm 24 and see how it falls into three great acts: the first centred upon the great hymn of praise, "The earth is the Lord's": the second involving the ceremonial ascent of the Temple hill, "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord?"; and the last act with its most dramatic dialogue, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates." Indeed the Christian religion has by no means a monopoly of dramatic worship.

At this point both Churchman and Nonconformist has some hard thinking to do. My arguments were reinforced most vividly by a Methodist member of the American delegation: "The dramatic element of the liturgy," he said, "has been almost wholly lost in American Nonconformity and it may well be that a study of the origins of dramatic worship may lead us to recapture some of the lost vitality." It would be very fine if it led to this result, but a warning has to be noted. It is probably true that some kinds of churchmanship have starved us of dramatic beauty that could in all reverence have been offered to God. Countless saintly Christians from the earliest days of the Church have made music, movement, dramatic word and gesture, into a pattern which has truly been a worship of God in the beauty of holiness. We must remember with all humility that there is nothing good in plainness and austerity for its own sake, and that was the point the American delegate so rightly made. We can with profit to our souls recapture some of the dramatic richness of the Church's worship, and we should diligently think and talk this out among ourselves. But while this is all very urgently true, what distinctions must be made and what safeguards must we observe?

I can perhaps best put it this way: Every craft has its own tools and every great public art develops its proper setting. The theatre has changed its form and shape through the years to meet the needs of the drama which had to be played in it. The Greeks performed their solemn, highly formal "religious" plays in amphitheatres properly shaped for their purpose; we are even at this moment in process of changing the shape of our own public theatres under the gradual pressure of new dramatic needs. If this is true in the art of the theatre, it is equally true in that very subtle, most complex art, the public worship of God. To enter an ancient or a modern church is to see a building adapted to the conception of worship which that age held which built the church. That incidentally is why it is so profoundly wrong to feel that *one* shape, that of the late medieval church, became permanently "right" for all subsequent churches, so that there is felt to be something vaguely impious about modern experiment in church building—but this, by the way. Of one thing we are certain: the needs which shaped the church building were the needs of worship, and when, in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries, certain theatrical developments of the liturgy or the sermon, into Mystery Plays and Moralities, became theatrically elaborate, the Church very rightly decided that the proper place for their presentation was outside the church.

With this hint from the past, two rich ways of growth open themselves

to us: on the one hand, the development of dramatic forms of worship to the glory of God and the edification of our minds and souls; and on the other hand, the fostering of Religious Drama, properly so called, outside the church. At the moment we are in such confusion about the two aims that neither is fulfilled and the results are shoddy. What can we do about it?

First—our activities within the church. Let me say at once that the standard here by which we must measure any work done is that it is offered to God in the holiest of places. Nothing unworthy, nothing second-rate can be tolerated; but there is infinite room for real insight and imagination. We have these days a deplorable tendency to freeze all worship into set forms, as though uniformity were desirable in itself. Outside the proper set round of the Church's worship there is a great area which could and should be rich both to eye and ear. Consider Holy Week alone, a traditional time of dramatic event, the point at which our Religious Drama began about a thousand years ago. Nowadays we have hardened our Three Hour Devotions on Good Friday into an elaborate set of eight sermons, we have largely lost the intensely vivid drama of Holy Saturday and so impoverished the joy of Easter Day. We could well profit extend the moving devotions now associated almost exclusively with The Way of the Cross; if we could but see once again the removal of the crucifix as a token of our Lord's burial and hear once again the fresh beauty of that first Resurrection play, written in the tenth century.

Whom seek ye in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ?
Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified, O celestial ones.
He is not here; He is risen, as He foretold;
Alleluia!

That is a complete play, and at the same time a valid part of the profoundest worship. It is obvious that we have here work for many years of patient exploring, study and experiment. Our ministers, priests, bishops and above all the worshipping congregations, must open their minds and their souls to the possibility that God is not of necessity worshipped solely at the times and in the forms which established themselves in Victorian England.

But we must consider, too, the more obvious forms of Religious Drama. Here again we shall clear our minds and avoid confusion if we think of some years in terms of three objectives:

First, there are the humble re-creations of Biblical narratives, either simply dramatised, the modern equivalent of the Mystery Plays; or reinterpreted, almost in the manner of a dramatised sermon—the natural parallel is *The Castle of Perseverance* or *Everyman*. Here the real problem is one of standards. Some of the plays used are deplorable, both in literary quality and their understanding of the faith; we urgently need information and guidance for our acting groups in this matter. There are people about who could help and advise if their advice were sought, and of course the Religious Drama Society exists for this very purpose. Equally urgent

the question of presentation. The great bulk of this work is done by amateurs, and while the true amateur is an admirable being—if somewhat rare—the amateurish is a fearful thing; indeed, when it becomes sloppy, slipshod or perfunctory, as it often does, the result is dangerously near blasphemy. I am not going to tell you that every medieval presentation of a Mystery play was first-rate, but two things we know: the texts they used were excellent, alive, sincere, and in some cases permanent works of the highest genius. Try playing some of them and see how a good deal of modern stuff fails to stand up by their side. And we know, too, that generally speaking the performances were infrequent, usually on one day such as Corpus Christi; that one quite brief play was the responsibility of a guild; that it was repeated annually for many years and must have attained some expert quality. The moral is obvious: we try to do too much, too often and with too little material to draw on. It would be far better to pool our resources: to make perhaps a central town or city festival at Christmas or Easter, where one or two short pieces could be played in a way as near perfect as we could make them.

The second objective is what we might call the shock tactics of the Church's drama. At the Oxford Conference two plays were shown, one by a Leeds priest, Philip Turner, called *Christ in the Concrete City*, and the other by K. M. Baxter called *T'Other Shift*. Philip Turner made a moving plea that we should be prepared to present the faith in drama which may be crude and even shocking to our sensibilities. In his own words: the evangelistic task is to preach Christ wherever men and women normally gather together. In Leeds this means factory, public house, working men's club, the home, street." Then from Berlin we heard Horst Lehrend tell us of his company's visits to prisons, hospitals, refugee camps. Need I say that this is something we could profitably think and pray about?

Finally, our third objective. Midway through the Conference we all went to Stratford to see *Macbeth* at the Memorial Theatre. A pleasant break, you will say. Not at all—it was no departure from the purpose of the conference but the finest, the most moving example of Religious Drama we had seen or discussed in the whole week. It was Shakespeare handling sin, the corruption of a great crime and the awful inevitability of justice, retribution and the restoration of a proper order in God's grace. Here is an important field for our study and practice. Like our medieval drama in England, like Shakespeare and his fellows, Eliot and Fry in our own country, Claudel and Ghéon in France, Nijhoff in Holland, O'Neil in America and a host all over the world, these show what is certainly the most significant development of which we must take note—the infiltration of religious motives into the professional theatre itself. To quote Eliot's own words at the Conference: "The larger aim we have in mind is the function of Religious Drama to leaven the whole lump. It will in the end fail of its purpose and be limited to a minority unless it influences the theatre at large. This may be an indirect and almost imperceptible influence, of which the theatre is not even aware; but unless we Christianise

and keep Christian the theatre, our Religious Drama will only have gone part of the way." T. S. Eliot has amply earned the right to tell us this.

You can see why I regard this Conference as a momentous step in our understanding of Religious Drama. We have hitherto taken a few hesitant paces in our own little ways. But within the church, in an enlarged perception of the dramatic glories of our worship, there is much to be learned; and outside the church, in a deepened awareness of what the theatre can reveal, and what evangelisation can be achieved, in the street, the factory, the prison, the hospital, there is a vast and noble piece of work ready to our hand.

International Conference on Religious Drama

Who's Who

President of the Conference

THE BISHOP OF CHICHESTER, Hon. President of the World Council of Churches. A Diocesan Bishop of the Church of England. President of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain.

Host and Hostess

MR. E. MARTIN BROWNE, C.B.E., *Conference Host*, London, England. Anglican. Director of the British Drama League. Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain. Has produced all T. S. Eliot's plays. Actor.

MRS. MARTIN BROWNE (MISS HENZIE RAEBURN), *Conference Hostess*, London, England. Anglican. Actress. Executive Member of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain.

Staff

MISS CARINA ROBINS, *Conference Organiser*, London, England. Anglican. Travelling Adviser and Producer to the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain.

MISS URSULA NICHOLL, *Assistant Conference Organiser*, London, England. Anglican. Southern Regional Adviser and Producer to the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain.

MR. E. N. HOGBEN, *Conference Treasurer*, Walton-on-Thames, England. Anglican. National Secretary of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain.

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

RS. K. M. BAXTER, *Conference Rapporteur*, Cambridge, England. Anglican. Secretary of Cambridge University Women's Appointments Board. Dramatist. Deputy Executive Chairman of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain. Former Editor of *Christian Drama*.

ISS PAMELA KEILY, Royston, England. Anglican. Director of "The New Pilgrim Players," the Professional Company of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain. Actress. Organiser and producer of amateur Religious Drama for nine years—chiefly in Sheffield and Bristol.

R. LAWRENCE PEAT, Leeds, England. Anglican. Northern Regional Adviser to the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain.

ISS K. BAINBRIDGE-BELL, *Conference Librarian*, Paddock Wood, England. Anglican. Formerly Librarian to the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain.

Interpreters

Mrs. A. Bild

Miss Sinker

Mrs. Burley

Miss B. Thompson

Miss O. Pocock

Miss R. I. Tylden

Miss A. Senior

Delegates

. EDUARD ABEL, Zürich, Switzerland. Press representative for German-speaking Switzerland.

E HEER B. ALBACH, Amsterdam, Holland. Dutch Reformed Church. Teacher of Dramatic Literature and Theatre History in Academy of Dramatic Art, Amsterdam, etc. Producer and adviser on amateur Religious Drama.

ASTEUR DANIEL ATGER, Drôme, France. Presbyterian Church of France. President Commission Art Dramatique des Equipes Unionistes. Dramatist.

ASTOR W. BARNARD (nom-de-plume GUILLAUME V. D. GRAFT), Amsterdam, Holland. Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. Poet and dramatist. Study Secretary of Church and Art, Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Netherlands.

ISS DOROTHY BEACOM, Finaghy, Northern Ireland. Church of Ireland. Teacher. Acts and produces for the Religious Drama Society of the Province of Armagh.

ERR HORST BEHREND, West Berlin, Federal Republic of West Germany. Director of the Vaganten Theatre, Berlin. This Christian Repertory Theatre tours Berlin, both East and West Zones. Writer.

EV. GEORGE CANDLISH, Edinburgh, Scotland. Minister of the Church of Scotland. Director of the Gateway Theatre.

R. JAMES CARLSON, Minnesota, U.S.A. Methodist. Member of Commission on Drama of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

ADAME L. CHAZEL, Nice, France. Reformed Church of France. Minister's wife. Leader of young people's group playing in churches, etc.

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

- MR. LEONARD CRAINFORD, Toronto, Canada. Anglican. Television executive, theatre director, etc. Technical Adviser to the Christian Drama Council of Canada.
- REV. F. N. DAVEY, London, England. Priest of the Anglican Church. Director of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Author of theological works.
- PROFESSEUR MAURICE DELEGLISE, Sion, Switzerland. Roman Catholic. Professor of the College of Sion. Dramatic critic. A representative of French-speaking Switzerland.
- REV. ROBERT DUCE, Petts Wood, England. Minister of Congregational Church. General Secretary of Congregational Union Drama Panel since 1948. Produces experimentally with Church drama groups.
- MR. T. S. ELIOT, O.M., London, England. Anglican. Poet and dramatist.
- MR. CARL FREDRIK ENGELSTAD, Oslo, Norway. Church of Norway (Lutheran). Journalist. Dramatist. Dramatic critic. Lecturer.
- MR. CHRISTOPHER FRY, Brecon, Wales. Anglican. Poet and dramatist.
- MISS JOHANNA DE GEUS, The Hague, Holland. Mennonite. Concert singer. International correspondent on Religious Drama.
- MISS ROSAMOND GILDER, New York, U.S.A. Dramatic critic, teacher, writer.
- DR. WALTER GUTKELCH, Bielefeld, Federal Republic of West Germany. Evangelical. President of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Berufsbühnen. Author.
- PASTOR OLOV HARTMAN, Sigtuna, Sweden. Church of Sweden. Director of The Sigtuna Foundation. Dramatist and author.
- HERR FERDINAND HELD-MAGNEY, Iserlohn, Federal Republic of West Germany. Evangelical United Lutheran. Theatre director and producer. Works for Home Missions, parishes, etc.
- PASTOR H. HELWEG, Copenhagen, Denmark. Formerly Minister of several Danish Churches. Dramatist, writer and translator.
- MR. HAROLD HOBSON, London, England. Protestant. Dramatic critic of *Sunday Times*. Author of many books on the theatre.
- REV. P. MCLAUGHLIN, London, England. Priest of the Church of England. Director of St. Anne's House, Soho.
- REV. W. M. MERCHANT, Caerleon, Wales. Priest of the Anglican Church of Wales. Senior Lecturer in English, University College of South Wales and Cardiff. Author.
- MISS STELLA MARY PEARCE (MRS. ERIC NEWTON), London, England. Anglican. Stage designer. Consultant on costume in painting at the National Gallery, London. Lectures in many countries on art history, historical costume and stage design.
- PASTOR POUL PEDERSEN, Bagsvaerd, Denmark. Rector of the Lutheran Church. Has directed many productions of Christian plays.
- MR. PETER POWELL, Birmingham, England. Anglican. Theatrical producer and author.
- MADAME MARIA SCIBOR, Paris, France. Roman Catholic. Musician and producer. Worked with Paul Claudel.

- ONSIEUR GEORGES SION, Brussels, Belgium. Director of "Revue Generale Belge." Dramatist, writer of dramatic criticism.
- R. EDMUND STADLER, Berne, Switzerland. Roman Catholic. Curator of the Swiss Theatre Collection. Teacher of Theatre History at the Universities of Berne and Zürich. Member of the Committee of the Swiss Society of Theatre Research. A representative of German-speaking Switzerland.
- RS. JOAN TUCKEY, Dublin, Eire. Anglican. Teacher of Speech and Dramatic Art. Councillor of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain. Producer of amateur Religious Drama.
- V. P. W. TURNER, Leeds, England. Priest of the Church of England. Dramatist.
- R. R. H. WARD, Ash, England. Non-denominational. Writer.
- HEER HARMEN ZONDERVAN, Oegstgeest, Holland. Actor, director.

Notes on the Plays

murder in the Cathedral. Earlier in July T. S. Eliot's play was produced by Mr. E. Martin Browne in Gloucester Cathedral. Mr. Martin Browne played Thomas Becket and was supported by a cast drawn from the leading drama groups of Gloucester. The performances were given for a week ending on July 17th. Mr. Martin Browne graciously arranged for the transport of the whole production to Oxford so that the delegates might see it on Sunday evening in the University Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin.

e "*New Pilgrim Players.*" Formed three years ago this is the professional company of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain. The purpose of the New Pilgrim Players is to present the Christian Faith in terms of the world we are in and to speak in a manner that is comprehensible to ordinary working folk of an industrial age.

The circumstances in which the company operates vary from cathedrals to the bleakest of poverty-stricken platforms. The plays have to be produced to fit either condition, and with the minimum of financial outlay.

rist in the Concrete City, by P. Turner. This particular experiment is an attempt to present the Way of the Cross in such terms and for such circumstances. The author wrote it with all this in mind.

The switch is very rapid between the historical, the modern, and the inner significance of what is presented. From Gethsemane onwards these three strands in the pattern of the play become clear, but demand a good deal from the imagination of the onlooker. The only possibility for the producer seemed to be quite simply in the nature of a charade-like technique in presentation.

Other Shift, by K. M. Baxter. This was written to be played on the workshop floor or in factory canteens during the lunch interval.

Summer School, 1955

This year's National School at Culham College, Abingdon, was distinguished by such flawless weather that practically all rehearsals, and the Demonstration Rehearsals, took place out-of-doors in different parts of the lovely grounds; only the Designing Group worked mostly indoors. Unfortunately, owing to the size of the College, we were not able to tell all who wished to come.

Mr. Cecil Bellamy's Group rehearsed the opening scene from *Elizabethan Murder in the Cathedral*, in "contrived" period costume, several scenes from *The Coventry Nativity Play* and the last from *Twelfth Night*, in modern dress. This is the first time we have actually rehearsed Shakespeare at an R.D.S. School—we hope it will not be the last.

Miss Marion Watson rehearsed scenes from Obey's *Noah*, including one newly translated from the original French, not given in the published English version. She was able to use a lawn with woodland adjoining, out of which the "Animals" came; this also was done in modern dress with token garments for the "Animals," and was profoundly moving.

Mr. David MacOwan's Group studied two styles of producing a simple version of the *Ruth* story (by Norma Douglas-Henry): traditional, with a large cast, lots of colour, and interludes of mime; the second with a small cast, modern dress limited to black and white, and entirely stylized movement. The demonstration, taking place after supper, was ingeniously lit by car head-lamps. Mr. MacOwan and students had rigged up many elaborate floods and spots for Mr. Bellamy's *Twelfth Night* scene which was last of all, done on a sloping site, with steps, below the terrace; this was most effective.

Miss Norah Lambourne's Designing Group, besides studying basic principles, made model sets and either drawings or models of suggested costumes, for one or other of the plays being rehearsed by the other Groups, besides making the props needed for the *Coventry Nativity*: caskets, crowns, a great sword for Herod. An exciting Exhibition was arranged for the afternoon of the last day.

Music was in the hands of Mr. John Dalby, who not only trained a choir and a madrigal group, but arranged—and mostly composed—incidental music for each of the plays, which was played and sung by students from other Groups: the "storm" music for *Noah*; two lovely *Glorias* for the *Coventry Nativity*, as well as entrance music for Herod and the Kings; a chant for *Murder* and a Psalm for *Ruth*; even a Wedding March for *Twelfth Night*. Apart from recorders and two skulls, instruments—"trumpets" and percussion—were home-made, and the results were amazing in their effectiveness.

An outstanding feature of the School was its integration; most students were doing something for a Group other than their own, in music, costume or lighting.

The Chaplains, Prebendary Basil Guy of Tavistock, and the Rev. Robert Duce of Petts Wood, Kent (and also of the Congregational Union Drama Panel), conducted the daily services, separate and combined, including the Sunday evening one, when the choir sang an introit, *Praise to the Lord*, by John Dalby, and the *Kyrie* from Schubert's *Mass in G*. We remember also the Intercession Service for the New Pilgrims one night—followed by a Thanksgiving one the next morning.

Classes in "Crowd Work," "Speech Work," "Lighting," "Making Stage Properties" and "Noises Off" were taken by the Resident Tutors, and in addition, Miss Freda Collins came over to take two in "Producing the Nativity Play with Children," and Miss Ursula Nicholl took two in "Movement in Plays." Mr. Bellamy lectured on "The Development of the Verse Play," Miss Watson on "Bringing the Play to Life" and Mr. MacOwan on "It Won't be All Right on the Night." Miss Lambourne lectured on both "Staging the Play" and "Basic Costume," and Mr. Dalby (with students' help) gave a musical evening—besides the hilarious Students' concert, of course. We had a delightful return visit from Mr. Norman Norton and Miss Geraldine Stephenson, giving "An Historical Scrapbook of Words and Dance," which had sprung from their impromptu interlude at Ripon last year. Fr. Geoffrey Pearson, S.S.F., by lecturing on "Drama and the Gospel," provided a great talking-point: how to use drama well for evangelism, taking it where the people are.

Mrs. K. M. Baxter was able to come over and chair the Discussion evening, which was immensely stimulating and—in every sense of the word—profitable, for out of that came the impetus which (a) demanded the Intercession Service and (b) inaugurated the means to put the New Pilgrims on the road for yet another season.

JESSIE POWELL.

Tenth Annual Summer School

13th—22nd AUGUST, 1956

King Alfred's College

WINCHESTER

NEW PUBLICATIONS

NEW PLAYS

The Breaking Day. Richard Lancaster. (Typescript.) H. 3 acts. 11m., 5 w., sold

A dramatisation of the life of St. Alban, the Roman soldier who became the first British martyr. The dialogue is in crisp modern English, and the story well told. (Fee: Apply Author, c/o R.D.S.).

Glory of Bethlehem. F. Cumbers. (Epworth Press, 1/-). H. 3 scenes. 2m., 5

An unhappy household in Bethlehem finds comfort and help from Mary. (Fee: 2/6.)

He Came Unto His own. Vera G. Cumberlege. (O.U.P., 2/6.) XH. 2 parts. 12

3w., 2b. (Duration: about 1½ hours.)

"A morality play for Christmas and Epiphany," written for a small country church. It is simple to stage, and suggestions for music are given.

The play sets out to show the Nativity in its place in the whole story of the Bible, in unpretentious terms. It begins with the Creation and the fall of Adam, contrasted with the obedience of Abraham, goes forward to the Passion, and then returns to the Nativity as the climax of the second part. The scenes are linked together by an Inquirer, who eventually joins the worshippers at the Manger. (No fee.)

The Other King. L. Temple Jarvis. (Epworth Press, 1/3.) H. 2 scenes. 10m.,

Set in the court of Herod. Chuza, the steward, and Joanna attend Herod's interview with the Magi, and later do their best to save the Holy Child. (Fee: Apply publishers.)

A Play for Christmas. Judith Gick. (Hugh Quekett, 2/-.) H. 1 act. 7m., 8w., 11

A party in a country hotel are disturbed by two strangers and a new-born child. Effective, but the identity of the strangers is not satisfactorily defined. (Fee: £1/1/-.)

The Prince of Peace. V. D. Peareth. (O.U.P., 2/6.) XH. 7 scenes. 14m., 2 angels, children.

A simply written and straightforward Nativity play, originally performed by boys aged 8 to 11, and subsequently by adults. To be reported more fully later.

The text includes detailed suggestions for lighting, costumes, etc. (No fee.)

Put on the Armour of Light. Freda Collins. (S.P.C.K., 15/6.)

"This book is intended to make the study of early English Church history as attractive as possible to those children, the majority, who enjoy acting." (Church)

The period covered by a series of short plays stretches from Druidical times to the founding of Westminster Abbey. The plays are intended as material for the individual teacher, and the scheme can also be adapted for Sunday School work, pageants, play-readings and puppet plays. (Fee: Apply publishers, or send donation to S.P.G. No fee for classroom use.)

The Seed of Bitterness. C. Goble. (Epworth Press, 1/6.) H. 2 acts. 3m., 4w.

A woman of Bethlehem who lost her child in the massacre waits thirty years for her revenge, and only loses "the seed of bitterness" when she meets Christ Himself.

A useful play for small groups, though hampered by too much narrative. (Fee: 2/6.)

The Thistle in Donkey Field. Richard Tydeman. (Hugh Quekett, 2/-.) H. 1 5m., 3w.

A "vegetable parable" of human life, in terms of the organisation of life in the thistle.

Every meeting to discuss improvements ends in frivolities and discord. When the real emergency comes, and the Donkey approaches to eat the Thistle, only the Minister of Roots can offer any hope.

An amusing one-act play for enterprising groups. (Fee: £1/1/-.)

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

Free Short Nativity Plays. R. P. K. Hallett. (Methuen, 2/6.) HX.

(1) **The Gifts of the Christchild.** 7m., 2w., angels, children.

(2) **The Rose of Christ.** 7m., 5w., angels.

(3) **Love, the Star.** 7m., 4w., 1b., angels.

Adaptable plays for children of Junior School age. (Fee: Apply publishers.)

Two Miracle Plays. Rosemary Manning. (Grant Educational Co., 2/-.)

(1) **The Shepherd's Play.** HX. Cont. act. 9b., 1g., angels, townswomen.

An arrangement of the Coventry Nativity Play, with additional sections from the Chester and Wakefield cycles.

(2) **Noah and the Flood.** H. Cont. act. 5b., 1g., angel, extras.

From several medieval sources.

These delightful versions of Miracle Plays have been prepared for use in schools and with young people generally. They can be given with an all-girl cast. Helpful notes on production and music are given. (No fee.)

Don This Rock. James Kirkup. (O.U.P., 6/-.) X. 3 parts. Large cast and choir. A Play Chronicle produced in Peterborough Cathedral last May, and specially written to celebrate the 1,300th anniversary of the Abbey foundation. A full report appeared in **CHRISTIAN DRAMA**, Summer 1955.

Our Manner of Life. R. S. Harrison. (M.M.S., 1/6.) H. 8 scenes. 11m., 5w.

A missionary play set in a Chinese village inn, during the troubles of the 1920s. (No fee.)

REFERENCE LIBRARY

The Legend of the Rood. F. E. Halliday. (Duckworth, 8/6.)

This scholarly book deals with the Cornish miracle plays, "unique in British literature for their handling of legend." The introduction discusses the history of the texts, and gives an interesting account of their original arena staging.

Mr. Halliday's own translations from the Cornish follow. These comprise the Legend of the Rood, "The Three Maries" and "The Death of Pilate."

Make-up for the Amateur. Callum Mill. (Albyn Press, 5/-.)

A practical illustrated addition to the "Modern Stage Handbooks" series.

PLAYS NOW AVAILABLE

Came Unto His own. V. G. Cumberlege.

King is Born. S. T. Hartshorne.

Bluest Adventurer. Lesbia Scott.

SPECIAL NOTES

English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages. Hardin Craig. (O.U.P., 42/-.)

All students of medieval Religious Drama are recommended to read this valuable new work, which rivals E. K. Chambers's *The Medieval Stage* in importance.

The Lark. Jean Anouilh. (Methuen, 8/6.) 16m, 5w. 2 parts.

Christopher Fry's translation of Anouilh's *L'Alouette* was successfully produced in London this year, and does the author full justice. Though its standing in Religious Drama is open to discussion, it contains features of great interest. The attraction of the story of St. Joan of Arc has drawn Anouilh as surely as it drew Shaw. There is a certain resemblance; both were bred in countries where religion is part of the air one breathes, but both developed on strongly individual lines.

The result, in *The Lark* as in *St. Joan*, is a fascinating jungle of ideas. Anon has set out to honour the "phenomenon" of Joan, without pretending to explain it. At the same time, themes and people familiar to us from his earlier plays really are left out. For example, towards the end of the trial, Joan becomes another Antigone, a trapped child refusing to compromise with life and "continue to live as a tolerable habit"; and the "intellectual" Inquisitor produces a twentieth-century brand of inhumanity that might have startled the Holy Office. The effect is sometimes that of a dramatist trying to write two or three plays at once.

The dialogue contains much that is beautiful and thought-provoking, and, technically, the play must be a classic example of what can be done with a minimum of stage furniture and the maximum of stage inventiveness. B.

Show Business and the Law. E. R. Hardy Ivamy. (Stevens, 25/-.)

This is a practical book. Written by a Barrister-at-Law, it explains with pleasing absence of technical mystification, what the Law has to say on all matters that concern the professional side of show business as well as much that concerns amateur drama. The book covers a wide field which ranges from amateur performance of plays through theatre, cinema, T.V. and radio to circus and performing animals.

All of our members concerned with production can, with profit, read the chapters dealing with Entertainment Duty, Censorship, Entertainments Taxes, Sundays, and especially the discussion of what constitutes a Public Performance. The author cites judgment given in many cases where alleged infringement led to an action before the Courts. Apart from the interest these give, they lend considerable clarity to the exposition.

A book to be recommended.

E. N. H.

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FAR AND WIDE

Bristol. The Bristol Guild of Cathedral Players

The Guild of Cathedral Players has had an unusually busy year. In the autumn of 1954 we prepared a play for the Stapleton Deanery Festival of the Mothers' Union, **The First Crib**, by Evelyn Hart, which was presented first at All Saints' Church, Fishponds, Bristol, and later at St. Francis', Ashton Gate, and Holy Nativity, Knowle. In Epiphany it was presented at Bristol Cathedral. It is a beautiful, yet simple play, and captures all the necessary sense of worship and joyousness, so closely linked to Christmas and its services.

Immediately after Christmas, the players began rehearsals for **Lazarus**, a play specially written for them by Meriel Trevor. Miss Trevor had spent the preceding Lent and Passiontide in Bristol watching the rehearsals and preparation of her play **Death is My Beginning**. As a tribute of affection for the individual members of the Guild whom she had grown to know well, she wrote **Lazarus** for them, fitting special players to special parts. The result was interesting and, far more important, a truly real offering from players and author alike. The whole production is especially our own, and was finally presented in the Cathedral during Passion Week.

The Bristol dramatic critic was much impressed with the play and with the deep thought behind it all. The players themselves will always remember it, not only as a play of great beauty and feeling, but as a work of creative art which was particularly their own, and so which they could give all the devoted service which has so continually marked their work in the churches.

Next Christmas and Easter we hope to present plays in Bristol churches which we have already received many invitations, and to whom we owe our services in deep thankfulness for the great happiness we all feel in this work.

F. M. H.

* * *

Bryanston

The Chester Mystery Plays.

"Ego sum Alpha et Omega—it is my Will it shall be so. It is, it was, it shall be thus. . . ."

With these words the great Chester Cycle of plays opens and ends. In the four intervening hours we watch the omnipotence and majesty of Almighty God, the fall of the bright Angel Lucifer, man redeemed by the life of Our Lord, His resurrection, and the Last Judgment.

It was an unforgettable experience to be one of an audience of a thousand, watching all these things in the beautiful setting of the open-air theatre at Bryanston School.

Between heaven, high and lifted-up, to the jaws of hell leading to the bottomless pit, there was a different stage for every scene. The planning and direction were superb. Very fortunate indeed is Bryanston to have a sister-school at Cranborne Chase, members of which took the women's parts in the plays. As in complete silence we watched the Crucifixion, and the most poignant descent from the Cross, we had a sense of terrible reality. All the effects were most carefully planned. Unaccompanied singing had been recorded by the choirs of both schools, and the lighting was excellent—how impressive was the approach of those who came through the darkness with torches and staves to take Him. Indeed, so good, so effective, was the whole cycle that one wondered why a little more care—or should it be money?—had not been expended on the dressing. There was a variety of costumes, ranging over many periods. Nor did I like the white sheets of the Redeemed. In view of the difficulty of dressing a cast of over a hundred players without heavy expenditure, this criticism should not, perhaps, be made, but it struck me particularly in connection with the Twelve. Judas Iscariot certainly did not strike the right note. Occasionally members of the crowd failed to realise that they had to be acting a part all the time, and

there were isolated examples of poor grouping—notably in the house of Simon the Leper.

What remains with me is not these small defects, but an immense appreciation of the whole great achievement. I have heard it said that these medieval plays have no message for today. After seeing the Bryanston play I profoundly disagree. E. H.

* * *

Gloucester

The nave of Gloucester Cathedral, with its heavy Norman pillars, made an appropriate setting for *Murder in the Cathedral* during the second week in July. Tiered seating had been erected at the west end, so that the actors could use the floor of the nave in front of the choir screen, and be seen without difficulty.

Apart from Mr. E. Martin Browne, who played Becket, the cast came from amateur groups all over Gloucestershire. The Women of Canterbury were particularly fine. The Choruses, which were well broken up into individual lines, came over with considerable power. At first, the thunderous acoustics of the nave made it difficult for strangers to the play to do more than follow the bare sense of what was being said, but in time the ear became more accustomed to it, and our strained attention could relax.

There seems to be a new tendency to depict St. Thomas as a much gentler character than history warrants—a saintly old clergyman set upon by thugs. Mr. Martin Browne's conception seems closer to the facts and to the character as Eliot sees it. This Archbishop has had to fight every step of the way, politically and spiritually, and has suffered for it. The tall upright figure is worn to the bone, the tired eyes are wary, the supreme dignity and power over others come from great nervous self-command that can still be assailed. His struggle with the Tempters is clearly the last desperate battle of many to keep the balance of his integrity. To such a character, the simple issues of the last scenes come as a relief—and surely this was the dramatist's intention.

Though this performance can triumph in any circumstances, one still

wonders if *Murder in the Cathedral* is in fact really suitable for production in cathedrals, with their sound problems and overpowering sense of height. Eliot's intricate reasoning needs greater intimacy between players and audience if it is not to be lost. It is notable that at Gloucester, the Knight's scene of apology, which most demands "audience reaction," went for very little; whereas the Christmas sermon which brought the Archbishop into the pulpit, on a level with his "congregation" and within effective distance of them, was the most moving passage in the whole play.

On the other hand, no theatre could equal the effect of the final procession as a long line of candle flames moved down the choir, and the response "Ora pro nobis" echoed in the distance. We might almost have been witnessing the original scene, on that December night in Canterbury.

* * *

Harpenden. St. Nicholas C.D. Fellowship

It was reported at the Annual General Meeting that the Christian Drama Fellowship had had a satisfactory year. One activity which was particularly successful was the introduction of Sunday evening readings, taking place immediately after the evening service. On several occasions the neighbouring Methodist Guild attended the play readings and return visits have been arranged. Sunday evening was found to be the most suitable time for the young members of the Christian Drama Fellowship to attend.

* * *

Mirfield

As part of the Commemoration Festival of the Community of Resurrection, Fry's *Thor with Arncliffe* was presented in the Quarry Theatre in July. Conditions for this and other plays are always difficult; the cast composed of University undergraduates fresh (?) from examinations makes the results not known, barely two weeks' rehearsal time and on the breeze, trees and trains. The task of production is a nightmare! As on

the cast, I can say what a wonderful experience it was for all of us, working with Carina Robins, the producer. Her attention to clarity of speech—so important in an open-air auditorium of three thousand—was particularly memorable. The great success was in converting Merlin's voice from an inaudible mutter into clear-cut and colourful diction, yet not sacrificing the portrayal of immense age. But we received not only the ordinary adventure of presenting a play, but also a religious experience which could not help being conveyed to the audience.

The costumes, with the co-operation of the Cornish Religious Drama Fellowship, were always colourful and interesting, which was a great help on the rather bleak Quarry stage.

We were brought face to face with the struggle between paganism and Christianity which is as real today as a Cymen's day and, to me, "Commem." 1955 will always be more than just a holiday.

F. W.

* * *

St. John's, Waterloo Road

Thine is the Kingdom, by James Millhousley, was given its first performance at St. John's during the week September 12th-17th.

This play tells the story of the family who own the inn at Bethlehem. The son of the house, a sincere patriot, believes that he is called to be the Messiah. His activities are betrayed by his brother, and he is crucified. The others, in despair, are only reconciled to life by the sight of the Child that they have harboured, and whom they had scarcely remembered in their personal crisis; the cause for which their loved one died will be truly fulfilled in Him.

The story is joined together by a Roman chorus, as a Seer. This proved to be an excellent idea, though it needs very strong playing to supply the much necessary for this vital link.

The theme is full of exciting possibilities, and there is much that is very good indeed in the writing and construction of the play, but it never fully develops fully, and its "total stature" is extraordinarily difficult to grasp.

St. John's is doing a valuable work

through its policy of trying out new plays, and we hope that this will continue.

J. N.

* * *

St. Saviour's Priory, Haggerston

Specially written and produced by Freda Collins to celebrate the centenary of the Society of St. Margaret, **The Peddar's Way** was performed in one of the Community's houses, St. Saviour's Priory, Haggerston. The masque tells the legend of Walsingham, where the Society has only recently opened its new daughter house.

Unequal though this production was, and under-rehearsed in parts, its moments of beauty outweighed its shortcomings. The setting was the red-brick cloister garth. In the seclusion of this small walled enclosure, cut off from the noise and ugliness of London's East End, the pleasures of open-air theatre could be enjoyed, without the usual disadvantages of inaudibility. Every word could be heard.

The cyclists, a party of modern holiday makers, to whom the whole pageant was unfolded, were particularly natural and their acting was full of vitality. The Narrator was outstanding. Quietly and simply he delivered his lines, yet with such sincerity and intellectual drive that the closely packed thought came across.

The producer had used great imagination in devising the grouping and moves—making the most of the various entrances and the different levels offered by the cloister setting. She had, visually, planned the production exactly to fit the small dimensions available. But there was a lack of balance between *spectacle* and *sound*. The music for three flutes (composed by Father Johan Schaufleberger) was just right, but the singing needed more body throughout. Most of all was this thinness felt in the building up of the climax, when a procession of modern pilgrims to the shrine led the audience out of the play to the culmination of the evening's celebrations in Benediction in the Sisters' chapel.

H. G. C.

* * *

Tegelen, Holland

In 1930, a group of the young people of Tegelen, in the Dutch province of Limburg, paid a visit to Oberammergau. On their return they instituted their own Passion Play, with a script written by the local Pastor, in an open-air theatre made from an old monastery garden, where it rapidly became a regular part of the life of Tegelen.

At present, the Passion Play Foundation has arranged to present the play (which now has a new script by Pater Jaques van Schreurs, M.S.C.) every five years, and this summer, from May to August, it has been given to increasingly enthusiastic audiences that can number up to 5,000.

All the performers are amateurs, giving up their time on Saturdays, Sundays and Church holidays, and the customs of Oberammergau are used in casting and mounting the play—even to the growing of natural beards and long hair.

Visitors to Tegelen this year have reported the deep impression that the production has made on them. It is

evidently making a valuable contribution to Religious Drama.

* * *

Toller, Dorset

The Cornish legend that Christ a boy, came to Cornwall with supposed uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, was the basis of the play, *The Boy from Egypt*, performed at Porcorum by the Toller Porcorum Religious Drama Fellowship.

In its setting on the Cornish coast, the work, a dramatic morality in three acts by Wallace Nichols, opens with the wreckers being foiled in their attempt to wreck another boat. The action of the play shows how the Boy Jesus does not actually appear, has such an astonishing influence on a heathen community.

The cast of ten presented a fine performance of this thought-provoking play against the background of cliff scenes in an ancient British villa on the rocky coast, and a tin-mine. —By permission of the Dorset Echo.

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